

NOTICE.—Accompanying this Number is a fac-simile of a Water-Colour Sketch by Miss Elizabeth Thompson, the Painter of the "Roll Call," entitled, "MISSED!" a Bengal Lancer playing at Tent-Pegging. A New Story by R. D. Blackmore, entitled, "CRIPPS THE CARRIER," will be commenced on Jan. 1, and continued weekly. The Postage of this Number throughout the United Kingdom is 2d.



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An Odd Couple.

By MRS. OLIPHANT,

Author of "Chronicles of Carlingford," "Salem Chapel,"
"The Minister's Wife," &c.

CHAPTER I.

HE; AND SHE

"IN that case, perhaps, it would be better that we should part."

These ominous words were said very steadily and precisely, but with a certain sense of nervous excitement in the utterance, by Mr. Charles Tremenehere, one morning in November, in his own drawing-room, and were, I need scarcely say, addressed to his own wife. To whom else could they have been said? He was not the kind of man who might have been expected to speak words striking at the very root of family existence, being, indeed, a very orderly and respectable personage, anything but a revolutionary. The amount of provocation which he had endured before he said them need not be entered into here. He had been married about ten years, and had two children, a boy of nine and a girl of seven. Mrs. Tremenehere was seated opposite to him at a small work-table knitting, with a composure which was aggravating to the last degree. Her needles met each other with tranquil regularity, and not a single dropped stitch or irregular line bore witness to any excitement of feeling. They were middle-aged people, and might very well have been married twenty years instead of ten. He was standing in the favourite attitude of Englishmen, in front of the fire, a thin angular man, moving with a certain jerkiness and rapidity, slightly bald, with refined features, and hair growing grey, and looking very much what he was, a clerk in a public office, much more experienced and learned in the country's business than was in general the distinguished "chief" at the head of the department, though he was a Minister of State and probably a Grand Seigneur, Knight of the Garter, and everything that was splendid—while his instructor and referee who kept him out of mischief was only Mr. Charles Tremenehere. Nevertheless, the injustice in this respect was more apparent than real, for Mr. Tremenehere was a man as well known in those high regions from which the country is ruled as the Queen herself, and most people whose opinion he cared about were perfectly acquainted with the real standing of which the vulgar knew nothing. "Tremenehere will keep him right," the Premier himself said when he appointed the rising man of the day Secretary of State for that department. Indeed, I need not tell you, dear reader, which department it was. It is in very good hands and does not require our interference, and it is enough for the purpose of the narrative that you should know who this gentleman was. He had been very much in society in his younger days, and still kept up his old friends, though his wife, whose taste was somewhat different from his own, had separated him from the tide of fashion; and he loved society, judging men and things by the standard in favour there, and making but small account of qualities which were not appreciated in these finest circles. This was a grave ground of debate between his wife and himself. They did not quarrel according to the ordinary pattern of conjugal quarrels. She was not a scold nor he a villain; he behaved as a gentleman should and she like a well-bred woman. But they differed incessantly, continually, with the heat of people who quarrel about convictions, a thing more persistent than the light differences which arise on every-day subjects; and so at last it had come to this—"Perhaps in that case it would be better that we should part."

Mr. Tremenehere felt when he said this that he had discharged his last volley. What more could he say or do? and he expected it to startle and appal his calm antagonist. He thought that an utterance so trenchant, so final, would penetrate through all her defences, and make her feel what it was to defy a man who was her natural head, her social representative. Almost he expected to see the common appeal of womanhood which he had read of in books, and which everybody, so far as he knew (who was not married to Mrs. Tremenehere), believed in. Mrs. Tremenehere had never yet yet to him nor pleaded for forgiveness. She had never broken down under any of his reproaches—never been melted into helplessness by his appeals. Would she do it now—would she cry—would she throw herself at his feet or on his neck and ask him to take back that cruel suggestion? Inevitably it must bring her to herself.

But, indeed, the result was not as he anticipated. Mrs. Tremenehere bore the shock with wonderful composure. She scarcely raised her head; she scarcely paused in her knitting. She allowed him to speak as calmly as if he had been saying, "I will dine at my club." And then there followed an interval of silence which was as if the spheres stood still to Mr. Tremenehere. His eyes were upon her, but she did not look at him. Was it that she did not dare to look at him? Was it her pride which kept her eyes on her knitting, her head bowed down? or was it the other? or both?

But if she did not feel the shock, he did, when Mrs. Tremenehere raised her head and looking at him, without any of the excitement in her eyes which blinded his, replied quietly, "I have no doubt, as things have gone so far, that it would be the best—in every way."

"Good God, Ada," he said in sudden horror. "What do you mean?"

"It is not what I mean, Mr. Tremenehere. I have not taken any initiative. We do not agree unfortunately, or think alike in anything; but it was not I who called attention to this. I had made up my mind to go on and make the best of it. But when you see it so clearly I feel that it would be foolish to contradict you. Yes," she said with a sigh; "it is a pity, but I think you are right; and separation would be the best."

"You think so?" he said, furious. "Oh, you think so! Good heavens! and this is what it is to end in, after all that has come and gone!"

"It was not I who suggested it," she said, resuming her knitting; "but since you think so, dear—"

"Dear! dear comes in well in such a discussion," said the husband furiously. He left the fire and strode across to the window, and stood gazing out with his back to her. The sight of her composure made him wild. "If we are to arrange this let it be without any pretence of false affection. Conventional husbanding may at least be put away now."

"I am never conventional that I know of," she said, slightly roused. "We do not agree, Charles; but why should we hate each other? It is this that would be conventional, not an innocent word."

"Oh, confound your innocent words," he muttered through his teeth; but this she did not hear, nor was she intended to hear it. He could hear the slight stir of her needles where he stood looking out upon the rolling of the fog which now lifted a

little, now came down heavier. Nothing could be more doleful than the prospect out of doors. Hyde Park, which was opposite, threw up a line of spectral trees into the yellow of the atmosphere. The passengers went by slipping upon the greasy pavement, the horses surrounded themselves with a halo of white breath like the *simba* of a medieval saint; the kind of day from which you shrink and turn to the cheerful fire within; but to poor Mr. Tremenehere the fog itself was more cheerful than the genial blaze near which his wife sat in her warm velvet dress, the impersonation of domestic comfort. How comfortable she looked! He saw her very well though his back was turned. With a maternal fulness of person, not too much, only enough to be becoming, light brown hair, not changed or touched by time, and a great deal more abundant than is usual nowadays. It seemed suddenly to flash upon him how changed the room would look without her, and the house and all his daily life. Was it possible that she could be so hard hearted, so cruel, so blind to every duty? If it had not been his own suggestion he would have turned round and laughed in her face. She gave away after ten years' companionship and quarrelling! Quarrelling when it is continuous and familiar endears just as much as anything else. She could not think of it. It must be a bit of bravado to frighten him and make him give in on the subject they had disagreed upon. Women were bad enough; but they were not so bad, not so heartless as this. So Mr. Tremenehere considered that the wisest thing he could do was to show the impatience but not the uneasiness he felt, and to rush off to the office where he ought to have been some time ago, but for the disagreement which had brought matters all at once and unexpectedly to a crisis so terrible.

"I am aware that you have plenty of time to talk," he said, "but I have not. I am off to the office. You have detained me too long already with this ridiculous discussion. Why should we have these continual misunderstandings? I advise you to put folly out of your head, and try to find some way by which we can get on like other people. I shall be back at seven to-night."

And he turned round and looked at her. Surely at least she would show some natural feeling now. But she did not. She bent her head a little and said, "Very well, good morning," and went on with her knitting. Good morning! Good heavens! What did she mean by that? "Good morning!" Was it anxiety? Was it determination? He would rather have seen her eyes, and then he might have known what she meant. But he would not resign the superior position he had assumed by waiting to see what her eyes meant. He had to go as he said, shutting the door with some energy behind him. He stumbled over the children at the door, and, instead of stopping to kiss them, as was his wont, pushed the little things away, who were all done up in their winter gear, great coats and furs.

"Is this a day to take the children out? Go back to the nursery at once," he said, not stopping to hear what the nurse, indignant, said about Missis. Missis! what was she that she must argue about everything, instead of taking her husband's opinion like other people?—when of course he must know best; he a man of the world. But Mr. Tremenehere went to the office that day with a heavy heart. He had "shot an arrow into the air," and he did not know where he should find that inadvertent missile. And all without meaning it! meaning nothing more than to frighten her; to show her what terrors might be if she did not mind what she was about—so warn her of possibilities which perhaps had never dawned upon her before.

Mrs. Tremenehere, however, was much more startled by her husband's suggestion than she allowed to appear; but scarcely in the way a wife might be supposed to be startled. It was not the fear of lost love or any sentimental disturbance which was in her mind. There are wives, and even some whose married life is not particularly harmonious, to whom such words would be as the rending asunder of heaven and earth; but this lady was not one of them. She did not feel the soil crumbling under her feet or the skies dividing over her head because her husband threw out the suggestion, that probably they might be better apart. She was not wounded in this profound and poignant way, but she was startled by the sudden introduction to her of a new idea, a something previously unthought of which was evidently worthy of thought. And perhaps she was a little piqued and slightly stung in her pride that the idea had not originated with herself. Even the most philosophical woman, she who has least care to preserve the often humiliating privileges of sex, has a kind of prejudice in favour of all such suggestions originating with herself. That her husband should be able calmly to contemplate a separation did not throw her into hysterics or into despair, but yet she should have liked to have been the first to suggest the separation. When, however, she had got over this she was seriously struck by the new idea. Separation? it meant a great deal which Mrs. Tremenehere had never considered before, and which she began to consider with the seriousness which became a very important matter. Living separate was easy enough to friends who perhaps might be better friends apart than if thrown continually together. It was nothing very dreadful even for members of the same family. Brothers and sisters separated continually, yet remained brotherly and sisterly all their lives; but a man and wife,—this was something totally different, involving a very great deal more. A separation of this sort is seldom considered in the reflective and calm spirit in which Mrs. Tremenehere regarded it. Usually it is decided upon in mere heat of passion, or under the sting of some intolerable wrong—and only when the misery of the two compelled to live together has become past bearing. All this was very different from her sentiments; she sat very still going on with her knitting, her needles pressing moving a little more quickly than usual, and her eyes very intent upon what she was doing, until at last she dropped her work on her lap, letting fall the ball of wool with which she was knitting, and which a playful kitten from the hearthrug immediately sprang upon. The kitten thought her mistress had done it on purpose, and that this was an invitation to play, and purred loudly to show her satisfaction, arching her back and looking up into Mrs. Tremenehere's abstracted face as she put her foot upon the ball. It was a pretty Persian kitten with a long sweeping tail, and the room was very pretty, with harmonious furniture and fine water-colour drawings, a carefully selected collection, for both husband and wife prided themselves on knowing something about art. The chair upon which Mrs. Tremenehere sat was an elegant Chippendale, which she preferred to the usual luxurious articles of the drawing-room. The table by her side was spider-legged, and daintily carved in ebony. An old Italian cabinet in the same wood, inlaid with silver, stood against the wall behind. Careful bought and taste, and some amount of culture, showed in every part of the room. A bright fire blazed, throwing pleasant lights about, sparkling in the glasses of the old Venetian chandelier, and doing its best to neutralise the effects of the fog without. When Mrs. Tremenehere dropped

her knitting in her lap she raised her head with a sigh and turned her eyes to the window, as it is so natural to do when one is in trouble. She was not young; but she was a handsome woman, with clear high features, blue eyes, and abundant hair—not fat, though that is the usual epithet to apply to a woman of forty, which was her age, but tall and of an imposing presence. And she was very well dressed in a dark velvet gown, which threw up her fairness, with old-fashioned ornaments such as betrayed the same prevailing taste as that which was apparent in the room. She was so entirely in keeping with the place that it may be supposed the idea of leaving it was not agreeable to her. But even this was not how the matter appeared at the present moment to Mrs. Tremenehere. She had not yet come so far as to think of leaving her home, or of any of the material consequences to follow, but was only startled into serious consideration of the idea and of what it meant, and if it really would be "best" as her husband had said.

She was asking herself this question when the nurse and child burst into the room in full walking array, as when Mr. Tremenehere had turned them back—every ribbon on nurse's shommet (and there were a great many), and every hair on her head, though they were less abundant, was bristling with indignation. The little girl had her finger in her mouth, and was whimpering in sympathy. The boy, more indifferent, received imaginary balls upon the short hoop-stick which he held like a cricket-bat, and let the woman talk with masculine composure.

"Please ma'am, master has turned us back," said nurse, running all her words into one. "It's a fog and we ain't to go out in a fog; and a deal of exercise the dear children will get in London if we don't never go out in fogs. I said as it was you, but he said as it was me, and gave 'em a push which it isn't like a gentleman," said the nurse out of breath; while little Vera, stamping her little foot, cried, "Naughty papa!"

"And master is as unreasonable as unreasonable, as well you know, ma'am, though you might say it," nurse added, before she could be stopped.

Mrs. Tremenehere coloured high, and when she flushed the colour remained, as she was well aware, on the ridge of her delicate high nose much longer than was becoming or agreeable, which made her still more angry. "You are very impatient to speak of your master so," she said. "Take the children's things off at once, and send them to me; and Vera, if you whimper you shall have a punishment. Go directly. I am very much displeased."

"It ain't us, ma'am, that you've reason to be displeased with," nurse began. "It's Mr.——"

"Do you wish me to send you away at an hour's notice?" said Mrs. Tremenehere in a low voice, hastily rising from her chair and putting down the knitting with some impatience on the table, as she dismissed the party pre-emptorily. Was this the end of it all? She had meant well, as well as ever woman meant, or so at least she thought; but this was the end. A servant who ventured to appeal to her knowledge of her husband's unreasonableness—a child who felt itself justified in saying "Naughty papa." Was this what she had done, betraying herself and betraying him, bringing down the credit and good reputation which she was bound to preserve? Then indeed he was right, and it would be best for them to part.

She had, however, little time to pursue these reflections, for soon after the door again opened, and the little pair came back, Vera in a little velvet frock like her mother's, with the hair cut square on her forehead and falling behind upon her shoulders, leading the way—Edith behind, still with the hoop-stick of which he made an imaginary cricket bat. Vera had a lapful of dolls in her pinafore—dolls without noses, without arms, with feet twisted off, with necks wrung, with hair torn from their heads, but only the dexter for all their misfortunes, as Ortelio was "for the dangers he had known." Vera tripped in light as a little fairy, her pretty hair streaming over her shoulders. She was one of those born actors who (up to the age of ten or so) are always consciously playing some rôle or other, and to-day her part was that of an anxious mother taking care of her offspring. The little creature took no notice of her own mother, who sat gazing at her with many thoughts in her heart, but seating herself on the other side of the fireplace began to arrange her family. She put her dolls round her like a class at school, setting them up to sit with their miserable legs thrust out on all the stools she could find, and then began to address them with busy gravity—now pulling a dress straight, now arranging a wig of tow. The busy little human thing among all these wooden counterfeits of herself was as curious a sight as one could wish to see. How she managed them, pulling this one roughly about, coaxing another, according to their character! and indeed there were to the child's lively imagination distinct traces of character in the very attitude of these ungainly babies.

"Try and sit up like a lady," she said, taking up unceremoniously one of her collected family by the head and setting it down again with a shake. "Is that how a lady sits? If you are all good and don't make a noise, nor spoil your pinnies, I will tell you a story. Oh you disagreeable little fright, why can't you hold your toes straight? Now listen!" Vera held up a small finger in the air to enforce attention. "There was once a little girl, and she was sometimes naughty just like you, and she had a great many little children belonging to her, and one that was called Rose, and one that was called Violet, and one that was called Lily, just the same names as you have; ain't it strange? And this little girl had a mamma the same as you have, but she had a papa too, and you never had a papa. You hold your tongue, you naughty Rose. You want to know what a papa is like—you all want to know? Well, a papa is a very funny thing. Sometimes he is good and gives you new dolls, but I do not like any new dolls, the nicest that could be got, so much as I love you, you dear old dirty naughty ones; so be quiet and don't interfere ever any more. But then a papa is sometimes cross. He is very funny to look at, and doesn't wear frocks like us; and some of them have beards, great hairy things like your muffs stuck on to your chin, and when they kiss you it prickles. But that is not all. Now you shall hear about the little girl in the story. Once she met her papa when she was just going out for a walk, and her nurse was going to take her to the Baker Street Bazaar, and she was so happy; and what do you think this naughty, naughty, cross, unkind papa did?"

"Vera, what are you talking about?"

"I was not talking, mamma; I was only telling Rose and Violet and the rest, a story. I often tell them stories—like what you used to tell me—that began—'There was once a little girl.' I never liked to hear about that little girl," said Vera, shaking her head; "she was always doing such silly things, and I knew she was mis."

"Vera, it is very naughty either to your dolls, or any one, to talk so of your papa."

"My papa!" said Vera with well-figured surprise. "I was only talking of the little girl's papa."

But here the boy, who had been silent interposed with masculine reproof, "What stupid girls are with their dolls! You might come and bowl for me," said Eddy, who was still playing imaginary cricket.

Vera threw all her dolls into a heap in a corner and went with light-hearted fickleness; while the mother sat by and went on with her thoughts.

CHAPTER II. CONJUGALITY

MR. TREMENEHERE came home that evening at seven o'clock. It was not his custom to be quite so early. He went late in the morning, and was not unwilling to stay late, and to get all the evening's news before he went home, so that the dinners generally were very late in Hyde Park Square. Mrs. Tremenehere, who was a busy woman with many occupations of her own, did not object to this—indeed she was (as he remembered on his way home) on the whole a very easy woman to live with, and disposed to use mutual toleration in respect to a great many things which women in general are inclined to make unnecessary fusses about. Oddly enough, when he came to think of it, there were a great many things in respect to which she was very easy. It was ideas that she fought about, but of all things that make a woman disagreeable, ideas, it must be allowed, are among the worst.

However, he dressed and made himself particularly pleasant at dinner. They were people who took pleasure in the table after a more refined fashion than that generally understood by these words. Mr. Tremenehere indeed liked a good dinner with that *naïve* devotion which is common among men of his age, but Mrs. Tremenehere considered cookery one of the fine arts, and studied it in an elevated and elevating way. Mr. Tremenehere had made up his mind when he married, with a certain respectful submission, that it would be madness to expect in an imperfect and newly constituted establishment under the charge of a lady whom he knew to be much too enlightened on other subjects, and consequently expected little from on this, the carefully regulated cuisine, the excellent cookery which to a man of many clubs, with a tolerable income, had become second nature. He had even had jokes made upon him on the subject, and had made jokes of a melancholy nature in return. But to his great and delightful surprise he had been able to turn the tables upon his sympathisers by giving them dinners which the best chef could not have surpassed. "I don't suppose you want banquets," Mrs. Tremenehere had said, "but I think we are capable of dinners of eight—or even of ten, if you please;" and she had kept her word in the most noble way. To such a philosophical artist as she had proved herself, it need not be said that a dinner for two—a delicate composition which answers to a copy of verses from a poet, or a short story from a novelist—was a special triumph of art; but on this particular evening, when Mr. Tremenehere came home, trembling with suppressed anxiety, from his office, and not very sure as to whether fate and his offended wife would allow him any dinner at all, the *menu* of the little repast was unusually exquisite. He took this, deluded man, for a good sign. He thought if she had been going to take those idle words of his at their full value and act upon them, that it was not female nature (of which, like many men, he thought he knew much) to have taken so much trouble about what he ate. He believed that she would have been spiteful, and refused him such a meal as he could sit down to with any pleasure. But on the contrary—! Mr. Tremenehere's courage rose. It is impossible to describe how genial he was. He praised every dish; the fish was a wonder of freshness—the *entrées* were perfect—the birds were cooked as one scarcely ever saw them of Scotland. He gazed and beamed over the well-spread table. Was it not a promise, a forecast of years of good dinners and friendly conjugalities—all the better, perhaps, for this sudden and alarming cloud—to come?

And he was equally genial to the children, whose introduction at dessert did not always please him. To-night he was the politest and most amiable of fathers. Vera, taking advantage of the opportunity, though most inopportunistly so far as his feelings were concerned, plunged immediately into comment upon the transactions of the morning.

"We have never been out all day, not one little bit," she said. "Why mustn't we go out when it's a fog? We have been ever so often before, and no one found fault. Papa, you know it was because you were cross you turned us back; and we were going to the Bazaar to see all the things for Christmas. Naughty papa!"

"Vera, I must send you to bed," said Mrs. Tremenehere. "Let her talk—let her talk," said the conciliating father. "Going to the Bazaar were you? I will take you myself when it is a fine day and buy you something."

"You!" Vera's delight was great. "Do you hear, Eddy? Papa himself! But you never did it before."

"I am always so busy, my dear."

"Are you busy? I should like to go with you; shouldn't you, Eddy? Better than with nurse, better than with mamma."

"Vera, that is very ungrateful," said Mr. Tremenehere, secretly flattered by the preference, "and, besides, I don't believe it. You would rather go with mamma."

"No; she would come any time. I should like you because you never, never did it before. I like everything that is new," cried Vera, clapping her hands; "and then you would be stupid—you would not know where to go, or anything. You would not know which was the place for the dolls, nor where those funny Japan things are. Will you come to-morrow, papa?"

"That is abrupt," he said. "Yes, perhaps, Vera, if nothing happens to interfere I will go to-morrow. Will that please you? and then I shall be made I suppose to buy half the dolls in the Bazaar."

"Vera, it is your hour for bed," said her mother; and the remonstrances which were on the child's lips were hushed by the fact that just then nurse came in solemnly and took her place at the door. As is usual in well-regulated families, mothers and fathers may yield, but nurse is inexorable. The children did not even attempt by any unnecessary blandishments to work upon the feelings of that Rhamanatha. They yielded at once, upon the feelings of that Rhamanatha. They yielded at once, upon the feelings of that Rhamanatha. They yielded at once, upon the feelings of that Rhamanatha.

fingers' end, when the saw how late it was and how little time there was for talk. He strolled in at length in a careless way.

"Give me a cup of tea, my dear," he said, with ostentatious friendliness. "I have brought some work home with me from the office, and I want to have all my wits about me. In such cases there is nothing so good as a cup of your tea."

"I am sorry, Charles, that you have work to-night."

"Yes?—well, so am I. I don't like it much. I assure you—but the country's business must be attended to," he said, rubbing his hands with premature delight over the success of his scheme.

"I don't doubt it; still our own life is sometimes more important to us than even the country's business—though I have never, that I know of, interfered with that."

"Never, Ada, never," he answered, briskly,—"of course, you are a sensible woman and know the importance of it as well as I do."

"And I have never wasted your time or kept you from your work for my own pleasure."

"Never, my dear, never!" He interrupted her more nervously this time, feeling that so strenuous a self-defence must mean something more.

"Then I need the less excuse for now occupying your time, Charles. I must speak to you. Things are involved of more consequence to us than there can be in your office papers for the country. The country is not in mortal peril that I know of, but our house is."

"My dear, you astonish me."

"No, indeed, I don't astonish you. You know very well what I mean. You cannot have passed the day without thinking of it. I do not think it is worthy of you to suppose that we can get over this by simply ignoring the whole matter. Something was said this morning—"

"Yes, yes! I knew you would come back to that," he said, pettishly. "Well—it was a foolish speech on my part. I said it in the heat of discussion, not meaning it. Will that satisfy you? When a man is very much provoked he is not always master of what he says. There, Ada! I did think that to ignore the whole business was the best—but since you insist upon it, I apologise, and I hope now you are content."

"The view you take of this is not the same as mine," said Mrs. Tremenehere. "You laugh: you are accustomed to hear such words from me. But don't laugh, I beg of you, for this is far more serious than any disagreement we have ever had. Charles, you said it would be best for us to separate. I have thought of little else since."

"Nor I, for that matter,—if that will be any consolation to you, he muttered between his teeth.

"Why should it be a consolation to me? It is not that I want to get the better of you, to be apologised to, or think myself the wiser. Again," cried Mrs. Tremenehere, "it is the old difficulty. You will not go to the heart of the matter. You will think only of the outside."

"It has no heart that I know of," he said, with a sullen acceptance of the new controversy, placing himself once more in that citadel of argument, the front of the fire. "The whole affair here is a nutshell. In one of our continual and apparently inevitable quarrels, I said some inadvertent words which I am sorry for. They were struck out of me in the heat of quarrel, and I tell you I am sorry for them; what more is to be done? I have said all a man can say."

"But yet you have not touched the heart of the subject. If, indeed, our quarrels are continual and apparently inevitable, that gives double force to your words. Charles, I have been thinking it over all day, and I think perhaps you are right. It will make a wonderful change in our lives, and it is not a thing to be done lightly—but yet I think you are right. We do quarrel a great deal. I don't know whose fault it is, but it is very undignified and unseemly. We will do our duty better and fill our place in the world better—apart."

"Apart?"

She said the last word so low that he stooped to hear what it was.

"Yes—apart." Mrs. Tremenehere spoke tremulously, but firmly. Never was woman stronger in her own opinion, and, perhaps, in all her life she had never formed a more decided opinion than now.

"You speak like a fool, Ada," he said, with a rudeness quite unusual to him. "This is carrying matters ridiculously far. And yet you are not a silly woman to leap to conclusions. You know as well as I do that there is a great deal more involved than mere agreement or disagreement. We can always wash our dirty linen at home at all events. If we quarrel, there is no occasion to publish it to all the world. And this must be done if we separate; nonsense; separate! for one ill-advised and hasty word! Expose ourselves, break up our household, put a stigma on our children! You cannot think of such a thing. One can surely trust to your good sense to see that."

"I have thought of it all," said Mrs. Tremenehere, "and painfully enough. That is the outside view of the question—but the other aspect of it is this. Which is best? To undergo what you have described once for all; or to go on quarrelling, never taking the same view of anything, bringing up our children without any feeling of homestead sanctity, to see their father and mother in a perpetual struggle, to take sides, perhaps, and fight too after our fashion, and think of us as of antagonistic powers? Apparently, so far as I can make out, one or the other of these must be."

"Folly! utterly far-fetched, and unlike your good sense. Why should either of them be?"

"Do not you see why? Charles, Vera came to me this morning, quite ready to enter on the fray. You had turned them back when they were ready to go out, unreasonably. Yes, I cannot deny it was unreasonably. You were angry, and you made them turn back saying it was the fog, and they came to me to complain. Of course, I had to maintain your authority; but I did so simply as a matter of duty. And children are very quick to notice this, Mr. Tremenehere."

"Oh! confound the children!" he cried. "This question surely may be allowed to be between us; it does not affect the children. Why should they be brought into it? Surely nothing can be more distinctly between you and me."

"It was you who brought in the children first, not I," she said.

"So! so!" cried Mr. Tremenehere, rubbing his hands together with growing rage, "and thus the whole old business commences again. It was not I but you—it is not one incidental question or another, but the entire matter between us, how we are to get on at all, what is to become of the family! I take heaven to witness it is not my fault. I said a few hasty unimportant words. I have withdrawn them—I have begged your pardon, which is a great deal for a man in my circumstances to do. If you are determined to go on, well! do it on your own do."

"It is true," he continued, growing in excitement as he went on, "that this house is a perfect hell upon earth, that

one is never safe from argument even at the moment one is least inclined for it. That is what comes of your educated women," cried the unlucky man. "This is the Attic salt they season their husband's daily fare with! Give me the old domestic drudge, the one that suckled fools, and gave her family a little peace.—This new edition of a wife is not the thing for me."

Mrs. Tremenehere grew red and then pale, but with that ridge of colour on her nose of which she was always so unpleasantly conscious. She could bear (she thought) a great deal of individual abuse, but general abuse addressed to her as a woman cut her to the heart. But she did not show anger as he did. She waited until he came to a pause, and then said deliberately:

"It is unnecessary, Mr. Tremenehere, to assail all women on my account. There are women enough in the world of the kind you like, who might have married you perhaps had you asked them, so in that matter at least you have only yourself to blame. The question is strictly between individuals, not between the sexes—and I must remind you that you yourself said it lay in a nutshell. We cannot agree. Therefore you think it is best we should separate—and so do I."

"That is putting it in a nutshell, indeed," he cried. "I never made any such cut-and-dry statement. I spoke inadvertently in a moment of excitement.—No doubt it was true enough if you come to that—but I have withdrawn it. I do withdraw it—"

"How can you withdraw it," she said quietly, "if still it is true?"

"Ada, you will drive me mad!" he exclaimed, wiping his forehead violently. She looked at him with a slight shrug of her shoulders, and no visible sign of her corresponding excitement except that red line down the high ridge of her handsome nose.

"Mr. Tremenehere," she said, "you withdraw everything and then you repeat it. Be logical. If I drive you mad—if our house is hell upon earth—why then it is unquestionable that to separate is the only possible thing for us to do—"

CHAPTER III. A MEDIATOR

MR. TREMENEHERE took a very strange step on the morning after this discussion. He went to call on his wife's chief friend, Miss Elmore Meadows, a single woman of fortune and advanced opinions, his aversion hitherto, and the very impersonation of everything he disliked—and put the case in to her hands. And in less than an hour after Miss Meadows burst into the drawing-room at Hyde Park Square. She was a handsome woman, with a wind of motion always about her, a "tempestuous petticoat," and hair somewhat wild at the best of times. Her hair was grey, curly, and busy, and full of life, running into curls and eddies, even when the most decorous attempts had been made to get it into order. On this occasion, when she had walked, and walked quickly, in the teeth of a breeze which had dragged it out from under her bonnet, and twisted it up in her veil, her broad white forehead shone out among the unruly locks with greater solidity and breadth than ever. She had an eager heatfulness of manner which corresponded with her wind-tossed aspect. Her clear brown eyes shone with the excitement of her mission. When she came into the orderly room it was as if a fresh breeze had been let loose there. She rushed up to Mrs. Tremenehere, put her hands on her shoulders, and gave her a kiss upon either cheek.

"Why, Ada," she said; "what is this? What have you been doing? Do you mean it, or are you only frightening this poor man?"

"What poor man? Of course it is you, Nelly. No one else comes in like a gale."

"I have come to puff the cobwebs away," said Miss Meadows. "I have laid a penitent husband with me this morning. Fancy! you may imagine how very droll I found it that he should appeal to me."

"Before you go further let us understand each other," said her friend steadily. "The poor man and the penitent husband do not of course mean Mr. Tremenehere. Any one else you please you can speak of so, but not him."

"Ada, he has been making me his confidant. It is very strange, I allow, but still he has done it. Are you both out of your senses, or what on earth do you mean?"

"We mean, my dear Nelly, as he has taken you into his confidence, to do the wisest thing we have done for a long time, to withdraw amicably from each other's society. I don't know what he may have said to you, but this is really how it is. We differ very much in sentiment and opinion. We have different ways of regarding things. He considers all subjects by their bearing on society,—I for what they are in themselves. This makes frequent dissensions between us. We don't seem able to modify our views, or rather, our way of looking at life, and we cannot allow the children to grow up in constant presence of that which, while it is only reasonable controversy to us, will look like strife and discord to them. There! you have the whole affair in a nutshell, as Mr. Tremenehere says."

Mrs. Tremenehere warned unconsciously as she spoke, and her voice quivered still a little in a little quiver. She was perfectly self-possessed, but not unmoved or calm. In the little trembling of her dress, in the slight vibration of her head when she ceased speaking, in the movements of her hand, she betrayed excitement which was almost passionate though so powerfully restrained.

"Ada, I don't know what you have been quarrelling about," said the intercessor, with deprecating meekness of speech, "but I could see he is very sorry. If he has provoked you badly, as I suppose, I could almost promise he will never do it again. Come, Ada—"

"Is it Mr. Tremenehere you are speaking of as if he was a child who had gone wrong? I cannot allow it—this is taking an entirely false view of the subject."

"Upon my word! and so because he is your husband no one is to say a word about him. You will quarrel with him yourself, but to others he shall be a demigod!" said Miss Meadows. "I don't care for the man. I never did, as you know. I don't care for men generally. There is not good enough in them, to make amends for the trouble they give. It is just like you. At all times everything that was yours was better than anybody else's. But I am not going to be put down; I have a mission, and I must do my duty to my children. Come, Ada, be reasonable. Fight it out and be done with it. After all I don't suppose he is any worse than other people."

"He is not at all of us. That is why I never understood your marriage at all, for any one more determined to be in the right than I am I never saw. Give in a little, and things will come round."

At this moment the door slowly opened, and the small figure of Vera fully equipped appeared framed in by the doorway. The child stood in her little velvet coat and furs, her little hat with

its long father pushed off her forehead, everything perfect and carefully arranged about her, an example of luxury and warmth and comfort. But Vera, though she loved her best hat as a little woman ought, was not thinking of it for the moment. She stood on the threshold of the room and searched it with widening eyes of wonder and anxiety and dismay. The changes on her little countenance amused the visitor, who had stopped short in her speech to look at the child. All expectation, pleasure, and brightness, just clouded with the suspense of a moment, was the little face when a slight shade of fear in them; then the corners of her mouth began to droop. "Perhaps he is in the library," said Vera slowly. "It is not possible that he can have forgotten?" and then the little mouth quivered, and a shower of quick tears came down in a moment. "But no, no; Aunt Elinor is there, and he does not like her, and she has frightened him away."

"I am much obliged to you, Vera," said Miss Meadows laughing; "but on the contrary, my dear, your father likes me very well, and it is he who has sent me."

"To take us to meet him," cried the child with a sudden recovery of sunshine, despising all probabilities; upon which a graver voice arose behind her, and Eddy said curiously, himself unseen: "He never intended it. I told you so. Vera, come along and don't cry."

"Your papa is very busy," he was obliged to go out early. I will remind him when he comes home," said Mrs. Tremaine. Vera rushed into the room and pulled off her best hat violently, pulling off along with it the pretty ribbon that tied her hair. She clenched her fists like a little fury, looking out through a mist of shiny locks with tears and rage in her eyes, and stamped her little foot on the carpet. "Eddy said so," she cried, "but I could not believe him. I would not believe him. Oh, isn't it dreadful; isn't it shameful! To break his word! You would kill me for it if it was me."

"Vera, you forget yourself," said her mother. "But I don't forget my promises," cried the child, "and why should big people be let do things which children mustn't? No, I shan't come, Eddy. I'll stay here. I don't want to go out. I don't care for anything. I have had a disappointment," and Vera marched to a corner of the room and sat down, gloomily turning her face to the wall.

The two women looked on with more interest than the situation warranted. Vera ought to have been whipped, I allow; but the circumstances are so certain changed character to her childish petulance. Elinor Meadows went up to her friend and stood over her chair, stooping to whisper that the child might not hear. "If you carry out your intentions," she said, feeling herself to be delivering a stroke against which no woman could have any defence, "what is to be done about them? Are they to be divided and separated like your other goods? Ada, Ada, you can never have thought of that."

"I have thought of little else," said Mrs. Tremaine, with a twitching about her lips. "Of course it is the chief thing to think of. It has been my thought night and day. In the ordinary way of arranging such matters Vera would go with me, and I Eddy with his father; but—"

"But—?" "If you only knew how long and how much I have thought of it! Yes—if I had Vera I should bring her up to be like myself—and I am not such a great success as I might have been, Nelly; while his father would chill Eddy into a nobody and leave him to grow up as he pleased, or as his schoolmaster pleased. But Mr. Tremaine is proud of the child." Here Mrs. Tremaine's voice grew choked, and for the moment she broke down.

"Ada," cried her friend, "for heaven's sake don't be obstinate. Why should you bring all this pain upon yourself?"

"I do it for the best," said Mrs. Tremaine, faintly; then she recovered her tone of authority. "There is, I believe, a principle in human nature which makes men kinder to women (in the abstract) and women kinder to men than either are to their own sex—at least, such is the general opinion. Bringing up Vera would be to me a matter of course; one knows all about it—it is a thing of routine, as we were trained ourselves—or exactly the reverse—we train our daughters; but a boy—that requires thought. Therefore, Nelly, it is my opinion that I could do most justice to Eddy."

"And Vera?" said Miss Meadows, "she whom you call the child? I know she is the apple of your eye, however you may choose to deny it; is Mr. Tremaine, do you think, likely to do the most justice to her?"

Vera's mother bore her friend's satirical gaze for a moment, then she put up her hands and covered her face. Vera, who was sitting somewhat sullen on a stool in the corner after her outburst, her pretty hair dishevelled and her pretty face stained with crying, had begun to wake up from the monotony of a fit of ill-temper which had lasted two whole minutes, and as her eyes began to wander round the room in search of some excitement, she suddenly perceived this group, which surprised her. Elinor Meadows, with her finger elevated in the air, scolding—as Vera thought—and mamma crying! Such an extraordinary concatenation of circumstances had never happened to her knowledge before. She started up from her seat, and threw herself between them.

"Aunt Elinor!" cried Vera, thrusting her small person in front of her mother. "You can tell me what it is if you want to scold—but you shan't make mamma cry."

Upon this Elinor, strong-minded woman as she was, began to whimper too.

"Child, you are a darling!" she cried, making a sudden attempt to kiss her; which Vera repulsed, standing up like a little lioness at her mother's knee.

Then Mrs. Tremaine raised her head, and putting an arm round her little defender, drew Vera to her side. Vera desisted from whipping all the same, I do not deny, and her mother knew it; but it was not in human courage to administer it now. She took the little impatient hand which had been raised in her defence, and held it between her own and kissed it. Though she had no much self-command it took her some time to clear her voice.

"Mr. Tremaine is a good man," she said, still faltering. "He will do as I mean to do myself. He will feel that it is a new thing, and that he does not understand it, and he will study what it best."

"But for a girl! A man, without any experience or understanding, left in charge of a girl!"

"Hush!" said Mrs. Tremaine.

Vera turned round from one to the other, her eyes widening once more with curiosity and eagerness. "Something is going to happen," she said. "Mamma, tell me what it is?"

"I cannot tell you yet, dear, for I don't know. Go, Vera, Eddy is calling you.—Who has taught her that something is going to happen?" she said, with a sigh, when they had watched

the child's unwilling departure. She herself looked so melan- choly and depressed that Elinor saw her opportunity. She was of an oratorical turn, and indeed had given some attention to the art of public speaking. She withdrew a step for the greater effect, and shaking her curly grey locks off her broad fair forehead, began:

"Ada! What kind of a woman are you, flesh and blood or rock and stone, to look at that child and leave her, and make up your mind in cold blood to give her up! I say nothing about your boy. He won't talk to me, I don't understand him. Mothers have weaknesses for their boys which are inexplicable; the most uninteresting, speechless, stolid beings! (I don't mean Eddy) and yet women will stand by them—for no reason but an accident of birth—while a child like that!—If she was mine, they should cut me in little pieces before I parted with her. They should take everything else I possess. Ada! I tell you, if she was mine I should not care for all the men in the world. I should take her whatever they did—steal her if it was necessary, run away, hide myself; but part with her!—never—not for the world!"

"I see what you mean," said Mrs. Tremaine, with a trembling voice; "don't take the devil's part and tempt me. I must be just. There are two of us and two of them, father and mother, boy and girl. He has a right to his share as well as I. We must be just. If it is barbarous to give all to the father, it would be equally barbarous to give all to the mother. Nelly, say no more! That would be a crime."

"Then I should risk the crime," cried Elinor. "I should care nothing for justice in comparison with Vera. Bah! abstract justice; who minds it? It is a thing to frighten babies with. Do you think Mr. Tremaine would mind about justice, if he could get the better of you?"

"You are talking of my husband," said Mrs. Tremaine, with dignity, "besides, if he were to do wrong a hundred times (which he would not) that would be no excuse for me. I will do him no injustice whatever happens."

"Then put up with him, Ada! It is your only alternative. Good heavens, what does it matter? An argument more or less, a discussion here or there. You have always been fond of argument. Make it up! For my part I'd almost marry him myself," cried Elinor, in a burst of energy, "to have that child—and you have married him, and got all the worst over. Make it up, Ada; don't be foolish—make it up!"

CHAPTER IV. THE BREACH ACCOMPLISHED

BEFORE Christmas it was all over. Christmas! Perhaps we make a good deal of unnecessary fuss about this festival—not that the associations about it, the traditions of universal kindness and goodwill which, fortunately for us, are so English, and still more fortunately are more or less so honestly carried out, can ever be exaggerated. Yet it is no doubt true that the universal jollity, the rude fun and sometimes mawkish sentiment which have got to be associated with the name, just as often disgust and sadden as delight those who have learned by time or trouble that Christmas does not always bring the reunion and happiness which are supposed to be its particular privilege. Alas! on the contrary, how sharply it reminds some of us of gaps not to be filled again, of empty places, of life diminished and wearing out! But whether we do rightly or not in making a saturnalia of its homely delights, certain it is that of all times to choose for a parting, Christmas is the least appropriate. I don't think Mrs. Tremaine thought of this; she had to many things to think about, how should she remember dates? It was the morning of the 24th of December, but she had forgotten, so full was her mind of other things, that the 24th of December was Christmas Eve. She went away in the afternoon in a cab to the railway station, with Eddy by her side, dull and lowering and miserable, not knowing why he was so unhappy. No explanations had been entered into with the children. Mrs. Tremaine was in reality so miserable that she desired to avoid dramatic effect as far as this was possible, and her husband naturally as a man and an Englishman hated scenes. So the curious boy and girl, full of secret interest in the something going on which was not confided to them were put off with the intimation that Mamma was going away for a time taking Eddy with her, while Vera was to stay at home to "take care of papa." Eddy for one was never taken in by this false explanation, but Vera in the delight of her own importance contrived to stave off her vague inquietude on the subject, and accepted it. The boy's inquietude was equally vague, but it was stronger. He felt himself a very forlorn wail and stray as the dreary cab traversed the streets, where all the shops were decked for Christmas, and where so many holiday parties were wandering about looking in at the shop windows for their Christmas presents. "Mamma," he said at last, when his heart was too full to bear the pressure longer, "isn't it very odd to leave home to-day when to-morrow is Christmas?" A big tear was forming in the corner of his eye. He did not like to look up at her, lest she should see it, or less—still more terrible possibility—it should fall.

Mrs. Tremaine put her arm round him. I will not say that she was in much better plight than Eddy was, though a strong sense of duty held her up. Something was choking in her throat which was not exactly the fog, and her heart was wrung with a sterner pang. She paused a moment to be quite firm and collected, and drew him close to her. "Yes," she said, "it is very odd, very odd; but I can't help it, Eddy." There was a kind of apology, a kind of appeal in her voice, and it went to Eddy's heart, who vaguely comprehended, though it would have been utterly impossible for him to put in words what it was felt and understood. He crouched himself up close against his mother, and caressed the hand that was round him, and allowed those two tears with which his eyes were big to drop upon it; and thus the pain in both was a little softened and sweetened, though the child was as far from understanding intellectually what the woman had in her mind as if they had been creatures of different species. But to go away to a hotel in Brighton through the cold, through the wintry fogginess and brightness, through the crowds of travellers that encumbered every railway, the clusters of happy holiday people, and all the humors and all the presents—one must have done it to know what it is. Mrs. Tremaine bought some Christmas numbers of various periodicals at the station to amuse the boy. They were all about meetings, dances, mistletoe, wanderers returning and hard hearts relenting, and every kind of revolution made in every kind of life by the simplicity of Christmas carols, snow, church bells, and sentiment. "Merry Christmas," Christmas, the porter said when he got his shilling. And so the strong-minded woman and her boy went off into the yellow misty distance which led to Brighton if you please, but which was the cold outside world,—outside of home.

Elinor Meadows joined them next day in the strange hotel looking out upon the quay, which Mrs. Tremaine had chosen as the first step in her self-banishment. It was not that Miss Meadows had not many cheerful horses to which to go for Christmas, but being a kind-hearted soul, as well as a strong-minded woman, she preferred to come to Brighton, and spend the festival in the dimmallest way over the fire in a sitting-room of a big vulgar inn, with her depressed and somewhat irritable friend. Never was a work more worthy of a good Samaritan. She came in the middle of the day, after church, which was the only cheerful portion of the Christmas to poor Eddy. The holly-berries and the wreaths pleased the child, and the Christmas hymns which he could sing, and which did him good, all they came out of church into the dreary world again. To be sure, Eddy wanted a hundred times during the service to advise Vera, and call her attention to a bit of decoration that pleased him, or to the little girl in the next pew who fell asleep, or to the clergyman cursing to the altar in his long cassock and surplice, or some one of the other anything, nothing that caught his childish eyes; but still church is church wherever you are, and not so terribly dull as a strange place far from home. And then it was a hopeless sort of Christmas Day, with neither sunshine nor frost, such as are orthodox and besting, but a drizzling dull rain, and skies so low, so leaden, and so cloudy that they seemed to Eddy to be coming down upon him, threatening to crush him every minute. After Elinor came (whom the children called Aunt Elinor for friendship's sake, though there was no relationship between them) it grew duller and duller for Eddy. He had not anything to do with the conversation of his mother and her friend, which was carried on in subdued tones, and with occasional warning glances from one to the other at himself which showed him that he was in the way—upon which, being proud, Eddy gathered together the Christmas papers his mother had bought him, and drew a chair to the window, in front of which he placed himself, shutting out half of the grey and stifled daylight there was, and pored over first one and then another of his stories, wondering to himself rather why all those tales were of people who came back, and not one of people who went away just at Christmas. He read and read, hearing behind him the murmur of the two voices, the sound of the sparkling, crackling fire, and seeing, when by chance he lifted his eyes, the grey sea breaking in a maddly soiled rim of white upon the grey pebbles, and the street, which looked like a very dismal Sunday street—"only rather more so," Eddy thought. But he did not often raise his eyes. He read on and on, one tale after another, scarcely quite aware where one ended and another began, till the monotony of his reading and of the lapping waves outside, and the murmuring voices within, lulled the lonely boy into a kind of dream.

The ladies had drawn their chairs to the fire; they had eaten their luncheon, they had done their best to be cheerful; and now the floods of remark and criticism and question which were in Elinor's mind could be contained no longer. She began even before poor Eddy withdrew, leaving them at liberty; and showed her sympathy, as so many friends do, by taunt and sudden reproach.

"Well," she said, "you have done it now. It is all over, and every place of repentance comfortably out off. How do you like it? You have given up your husband to confusion and remorse. You have left your child—"

"Mr. Tremaine has nothing to be remorseful about," said his wife, with a slight shiver, turning away from the last suggestion. "You mistake the matter altogether, Elinor. You do not understand either me or him. I blame him for nothing. He has no need to be remorseful on my account."

"Then why, in the name of heaven, did you go away? I never believed you would carry it out. I expected you to threaten and frighten him, and then to relent."

"That is to say," cried Mrs. Tremaine, "that you expected me to do exactly what the woman whom you find fault with in books, and are indignant about as a man's idea of women. You expect me to say things I don't mean, and do the reverse of what I say, and act like a creature without conscience, or honour, or moral responsibility."

"Ada! No, I don't do anything of the sort. Don't please come down upon an unfeeling person in this way. I don't quite see why, in a case where the feelings are concerned, you should not act as a great many other people act, who are not without honour or conscience."

"I may be wrong," said Mrs. Tremaine. "No one is free from the risk of taking a wrong view. But to threaten anything without meaning to do it is not possible to me. This seemed to me right—"

"Yes, yes, I know," said Elinor. "We need not discuss it over again. Isn't there a book which is called 'He Knew He was Right'? We must put it the other way now. You are right and you are satisfied. And now what are you going to do? You can't stay always here."

"No, I am going—to devote myself to *his* education."

She would not say Eddy's name to attract his attention. Was he not happily unconscious, absorbed in his Christmas stories? so, at least, she thought.

"That too is abstract, Ada. Don't tell me where you mean to go unless you like—but give me some idea of your plans."

"I have not any yet. I must find out what is best."

"Put him to school, Ada. That is always best for boys. Put him to some good school, and then when you are free of responsibility, come abroad with me. I have been thinking of it all the morning. You want change, you want refreshment. You have been worried and tired. Get the boy comfortably disposed of, so that you need have no anxiety about him, and come with me."

"Get him comfortably disposed of where I shall have no anxiety about him!" Mrs. Tremaine repeated slowly with a smile.

"Yes," said Elinor, suspecting no sarcasm in her tone, "it would be the very thing to do. That is the chief good of children at his age; you can dispose of them in so satisfactory a way. Vera under the care of her father, Eddy at school; and then you and I—"

"Can go and enjoy ourselves?" said Mrs. Tremaine with a forced laugh.

"Why not? Of course we should enjoy ourselves. Don't you recollect before you were married that trip we took? I was not much more than a girl, and how I did enjoy it! I never thought there would be such luck for me again. Come, Ada, now you are free, with only the boy to dispose of, this is the very thing to do. We might start almost at once; stay at Nice or Cannes, to rest ourselves a little, and then on to Rome."

Mrs. Tremaine rose before Elinor had got this length, and began to walk about the room in an agitated way. Then she went across to where Eddy, in front of the window, had dropped half asleep over the stories, with the monotony and the misery and the stillness. She woke him up bending over him,

away, languid and indifferent. For the first time Mrs. Trembeore noticed the change in the boy. A great wrinkle of anxiety came into her forehead. "Nelly, I am very much obliged to you," she cried. "What shall I do?"

"Miss Meadowglowed and expanded with the sense of victory. "Aha," she said, "it is not many people who have the sense to see where they have been wrong. I always said you were an ordinary woman. Send him to school, my dear—send him to school; let him be among other boys; try him with wholesome neglect; and come off to Italy with me."

CHAPTER V

EDUCATION.

Mrs. Tremaine listened very seriously till Elmer came to her last clause, then she laughed, though her face was still clouded. "Come and walk," she said.

In the meantime things were going on very differently, and yet with much the same result, at Hyde Park Square. Mr. Tremerevere was very kind to Vera when she came immediately under his notice. He still allowed her to pour out his tea for him in the morning while he read his newspaper, and had her down stairs to amuse him after dinner, when now and then he dined at home. But in a very short time after his wife left him, this ceased to be his ordinary custom. He got over the scandal much better than he had hoped. It was taken upon him, Society was out of town, and therefore he had passed comparatively with ease and without much difficulty the left back into his bachelor habits. He had suffered more at the moment than she did, but he did not suffer very much after it was over, and when the secondary consequences he feared proved in great part illusory. Life had liked his old life with all its varieties and comforts, and now, notwithstanding the interval of ten years which he had spent in trying to learn how to be happy otherwise, he took it up again with unaltered pleasure. Now and then a few men dined with him at home, and then Vera would come down in her best frock, and chatter to them, and do the honours with childish excitement, her eyes shining with the novelty and pride of her position. Mr. Tremerevere had been considerably startled, it is not to be denied, by her talk on several of these occasions, and one morning he remonstrated gently.

"When there is company, as the servants say, a little girl of your age should be very quiet, Vera. It is not to you, my dear, that my friends look for amusement. You must be quiet and good, and answer when people speak to you."

"Why, papa, they all like to talk to me best," said Vera, tossing her little head. "They all laugh and say I am clever. Why shouldn't I talk? I am very fond of talking. I talk to everybody, and that is why people like me, and say I am not at all proud."

⁴¹ "What sort of people do you talk to?" said her father, half alarmed, half amused.

"Oh, all sorts of people; not only gentlemen, papa. When nurse goes to see her friends I go with her, and they all say it is nice of me not to be proud. They are going to have a party in the kitchen to-night. It is much fun. There have tea, and then

the kitchen in-flight. It is later said, they have tea, and then they dance, and then they have supper, and natic says if I am good I may stay to supper this time.

"This time!" said Mr. Tremaine, with horror; "have you gone to anything of the sort before?"

party near door; but oh," said Vera, suddenly, "I am afraid I ought not to have talked of it. I don't think they like the masters to know."

Mr. Tremembeere rose and walked about the room in great agitation. Here was an unlooked-for disclosure. For a moment he was quite appalled by the discovery he had made. "Vera," he said in a voice which trembled, "you must promise not to

"Papa! not to go!" cried Vera, the corners of her mouth drooping: "oh, you can't mean it! you can't mean it! It is

such a nice party, papa, and they take such care of me. I sit next to nurse or the cook always, and I dance with the eldest

people only. There was once somebody quite as nicely dressed as you, and with beautiful diamond studs, and who could speak French and do all sorts of things. Papa, you can't mean it.

"The only party you ever have! I thought you went out a

"Yes, baby parties; I don't care for them," said Vera, with serene fatuity, looking her father in the face, and holding up

After this a storm arose. Mr. Tremmerheere sent for his three principal functionaries, Jarvis, the cook, and the nurse, and demanded to know how they dared to take Miss Vera

to their d— parties. He was not a man who interfered much in his household, and when he did so he was usually calm and unbi-
 asite, a thing which the domestics understood much less and

resented much more deeply than the chance blasphemy, which they forgave easily. Jervis stammered out excuses, and apologies, and protestations, "As I was always against it, and knew

It wasn't no place for Miss Vera." Nurse retired in floods of tears, which threatened every moment to become hysterics, and cook, who was hot-tempered, threw up her place. Vera, very

red and very angry, started in front of the accused to taunt them. "Tapi! when it was I who told you! They will never trust me any more; they will think I am a traitor and betrayed them. They can go out to seek them, when it is all my fault."

"Take Miss Vera upstairs," said Mr. Tremaine to the housemaid who stood by. "Go at once without a word," he

cried, and very reluctantly the child, still hot and red with excitement, was forced to obey. Vera was shut up all day, and overwhelmed by reproaches from the nurse. "You see what

"Can't you never hold your tongue, as I'm a telling of you night and day? Them as can't hold their tongues should never

be let into secrets, and it's all over Miss Vera, I can tell you, between you and me. No more parties in this house, nor no other house, no more cakes as I asked cook to make for you—

no more nice suppers. After this you'll go to bed at eight o'clock regular, as you used to in your mamma's time, and when you feel to want something nice you needn't look to me. And

here's poor cool, losing her good place along us your travel," she added, discharging his last arrow with full confidence in its effect. There was no party in the house that night, but nobody

solitary. She was put to bed, and left there in solitude to cry her eyes out, no one coming near her. "Oh, mamma, mamma!" said poor little Vera, forlorn in the darkness. Her

mother was miles off, and could not hear; her father was at his club; the servants were having an indignant supper four stories off, and there was nobody to say a word

However, after these very different scenes, both Jussand and wife set themselves to think on the subject, as Mrs. Tiemebeere

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had predicted. "He shall not say that the boy is ruined by a woman's training," she said to herself; and "She shall not taint me that I have not been able to look after the girl," said Mr. Tremenehere. This delightful spirit of opposition worked strongly in concert with other feelings more laudable, for indeed both parents were fond of their children in their different ways. Mrs. Tremenehere's part was the easiest of the two, and she took her steps promptly. The very next day after that revelation had been made to her, she went off to one of the great public schools and put Eddy's name down, and began herself to look for a house in the neighbourhood, for she did not mean to throw the boy off entirely, as her childless friend thought right and expedient. Before Easter, at which time Eddy began his school life, she had found the house she wanted, a villa on a hillside, which was not high indeed, but which had all the advantages of much greater height, since it looked over a great plain of rich cultivated country, fields, and hedges, and fine trees, and red farmhouses, with here and there a great mansion gleaming away into the far distance, till it got indistinct like the sea, and almost as suggestive. Here she settled and furnished her house, which was agreeable work, and tossed the pale boy into the sea of life and youth close by—where he soon ceased to be pale.

Mr. Tremenehere, poor man, had a more difficult task. The first thing he did was to reflect bitterly upon his wife's abandonment of her natural duty. "It is just like a woman," he said to himself through his teeth. "They profess to love their children beyond everything, and yet they will give up their children rather than give in or own themselves wrong." But this reflection, though it was in its way satisfactory, did not help him to the solution of his problem. How was he to bring up his daughter? In his perplexity he betook himself wisely to a friend who was a clergyman, and had to do with all kind of educational and benevolent institutions. "I suppose I want a governess," he said. "She must be old to avoid scandal, and well educated and so forth, but chiefly she must be a dragon—recollect this. She must never relax night nor day. I will have my girl well looked after; that is one thing I am determined on. A woman who will expect everything, believe nothing, and keep an eye upon her for ever."

"Surely this is going too far. It is against the spirit of the time. Everything tends to emancipate women, Tremenehere, not to make slaves of them."

"I hate the spirit of the time," he said. "I hate your enlightened women that know the world as well as we do. I want my girl to be of the old type. I want her to be seen and not heard, like our grandmothers. And therefore I want a dragon for her governess—a woman that will allow nothing out of the regulation in point of propriety—an iceberg, a machine, whatever you please, but one that will guard the child, and watch her and make her incapable of mischief. Now, if you have any regard for me, bestir yourself and find out what I want."

"I have her," said the clergyman, sighing. "So few people want dragons nowadays that I feared she would have to fall back upon the Home, poor lady. But as that is what you want—only I don't think you'll find it successful with a high-spirited child like Vera."

"Vera's high spirits must come down," said her father. "I want a soft, submissive, yielding girl, and not a self-opinionated being that will set up for a mind of her own. What do they want with minds of their own?"

"Tremenehere, you speak like a Turk."

"Perhaps I feel like one," he said, dismissing the subject with a forced laugh. And this was how he found his way out of the dilemma. Miss Campbell arrived at the end of the week, a tall, severe Scotswoman, with a large nose and high cheekbones. She was over fifty, and she had been trained in the belief that young ladies ought to be kept in absolute subjection. A girl who had no will but that of her parents, and who consulted her mother with her eyes before she took a piece of bread and butter, was Miss Campbell's ideal; she was exactly the kind of person to satisfy Mr. Tremenehere.

Thus father and mother entered at the same time into the right way, or into what they thought to be the right way; and the two experiments of education began.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE ELEVEN

A BRIGHT July day, early in the month, with London still full, and all the world weary yet toiling on, more or less, in the treadmill work of society; such a day as revives the toilers in that everlasting round, and breathes into hundreds of worn-out minds an air of freshness, waking them up from the fatigue of their pleasures and of their disgust. Stands all round, with ladies ranged one row above another like banks of flowers, carriages thronging twenty deep, and crowds standing in a deep inner ring. But it is not a race-course, like Ascot or Epsom. It is in the heart of London; and all these thousands of fine people surround a green smooth lawn on which a set of boys are playing, as such great matters, even would I suppose, and little comprehensible to a foreigner. Yet surely this is one of the most innocent, the kindest of all freaks of fashion. The fine ladies are turned as by magic into mothers and sisters. They have their parasols and their dresses and their horses' heads trimmed with symbolical ribbons. Many of the younger ones watch the game with an anxiety as great as if the welfare of the kingdom depended upon it; and the men, worldworn men from all sorts of unlikely places, men from the clubs and the public offices, and Parliament, and business, carry their enigmas too, if not so openly, in some snip of blue somewhere about them, a forget-me-not in a button-hole, a tassel to an umbrella. And this is all, need I say, for Eton against Harrow, the Public Schools Match. Not to a hundredth part of these crowds is it given to have a personal interest in the sublime band on either side. But as every smallest nip, with his knot of blue ribbon, feels himself Eton or Harrow impersonated against all the world, so all the elder people stand by the school to which they are vaguely attached in the person of that smallest of schoolboys with as much fervour as if they belonged to the Captain of the Eleven. But those who do belong to the Captain of the Eleven—those who can with exultant yet anxious eyes follow the opposition of that demigod as he comes and goes—who can describe the feelings that agitate their bosoms? Such feelings had full sway on the special occasion to which we refer, in a certain modest carriage, holding two ladies, which occupied one of the places in the front rank at Lord's, carefully placed there before daylight to make sure of a good view. The elder lady in it took but little interest in what was going on, but then, though the elder, she was the least important and her young companion was entirely absorbed in the scene. She was but sixteen, dressed in the simplest demure costume of white, and sometimes whiter still than her

dress with agitation, sometimes all flushed and rosy-hot with excitement. Her eyes, her whole soul, her whole heart were fixed on the game and the players. Her young bosom gave a great throb whenever there was a good hit on her own side. Her heart sank when the good hit was on the other. She had neither sight, nor hearing, nor understanding for anything else. And who will wonder? She was the sister of the Captain of the Eleven. It is unnecessary to say which of the blues that captain wore. Tremenehere had played once before for his school, but as this was almost by an accident, and not known until the last moment, "his people" did not have the glory of it as they ought; but with full announcement and preparation the once backward Eddy, the boy whom his mother had spoilt, burst suddenly upon the world now. And everything else was dwarfed to Vera by this event. All other honours and delights grew dim before it. She watched her brother (whom she scarcely knew) with a strange enthusiasm, and eagerness, and anxiety which it is impossible to describe. How could she bear to see him beaten? If life and death had been on it she could not have taken it more seriously. Her hand was on the door of the carriage, sometimes trembling, sometimes holding it tight with agony when the other side seemed to be making progress; the pretty girlish figure bent a little forward, her eyes intent, never losing a movement, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, unaware who came near her, who passed, even who spoke to her,—and all this for a cricket match! But then it was much more than a cricket match for Vera. Her brother seemed to her the very foremost young man in England. Had not he and his comrades eclipsed all other incidents in busy London on this hot day? Parliament itself was diminished. There was nobody in the Row, afternoon teas were as good as done away with; telegrams from hour to hour appeared in all the papers, the streets were full of the two different blues. What wonder that Vera, only sixteen, should think her brother the very greatest personage that ever girl belonged to? She looked at the card in her hand now and then when Edward was not playing to read his name with a thrill of fresh excitement. "Tremenehere, captain." If he had come to this honour and glory when he was only eighteen, what prizes must not life hold for such a hero?

"Vera, my dear, I think you should put down your veil? People are remarking you. I don't think it is nice to be so absorbed in anything. You forget yourself altogether, my dear."

"Why should I remember myself?—there is nothing in me to remember," she said, in her excitement. Then coming to herself, "Oh please, Miss Campbell, I do so hate a veil. It gets in one's eyes, and one can't see."

"Dear, how often must I tell you that a well-bred girl expresses herself much more quietly. Take the opera-glass, then, that conceals the face."

"But I can see very well without it. I can see Eddy quite plain. Look, Miss Campbell! I can always make him out. There! for me!"

"I don't understand the interest you all take in this game," said Miss Campbell. "In Scotland the gentlemen play golf, which they tell me is much finer exercise. All this I think is very bad for the boys. And had for you too, Vera. If you get so very much excited I think I must take you away."

Vera knew that this could not be done, and therefore heard the threat calmly. Fortunately, after a while, Miss Campbell got engrossed with something else, and with a sigh of relief she let the glass drop, thus revealing her moving animated countenance all at once to two people to whom the sight of it was like something from heaven. The one was a middle-aged woman, no more or less than Vera's mother; the other, a young man. Let us keep the more interesting personage to the last. Mrs. Tremenehere has the best right to come forward. She stood at a little distance among the crowd looking at her child. She had always called Vera by this name. After years of virtual separation—though there never had been any personal objection made on either side to either parent seeing the children when he or she pleased—here was the child she had left grown into a woman. I cannot describe the feelings with which her mother regarded her, gazing at the young absorbed countenance. Little Vera, the baby, the plaything, the amusement of the house, the little lad of life whom she had left behind, not knowing what was to come of her!

"Look, Elinor," she said, grasping the arm of her inseparable companion, and leaning on her with a trembling which she could not command.

"I see her," said Miss Meadows, cheerfully. "Hasn't she grown up pretty? Come and speak to her, Ada. She must be looking for you."

"She is looking for her brother, nothing else," said Mrs. Tremenehere. "Wait a little, Nelly! I feel like a divorced woman, with no right to go near my child. God help us! what those wretched beings must suffer! I never thought of it before."

"One never does think of other people's sufferings till one shares them," said Elinor, oracularly. "Thank heaven you are not so bad a child. Come along. Shall I go first and tell her?"

"Wait a little!"

Mrs. Tremenehere, though she was a strong-minded woman, trembled for the meeting. What would the child think of the mother who had deserted her? If she had been only a child! but a woman with a mind and judgment—who could understand and perhaps condemn. She stood by and looked at this creature of sixteen with her heart in a flutter. The judgment of a child is a terrible tribunal. One can face the world and one's equals, knowing all that is in one's favour, and feeling the full force of one's rights. But the secret verdict of a boy or girl, whom natural respect will prevent from expressing it or even defining it to themselves—what a thing that is to encounter! Very seldom do fathers or mothers encounter this judgment in so dramatically distinct a manner as Mrs. Tremenehere had to do; and she trembled and held back. What if she should read dislike, disapproval, the pained and wondering sentence of the innocent in Vera's eyes?

In the meantime the other individual of whom I have spoken had gone past again, gazing fitfully at the carriage. "Jove! how pretty she is," he was saying to himself. "How absorbed she is, not seeing me nor any one! That's what I like in a girl; never to see you if you stare like a madman. Why should she? The ones that are thinking of themselves see you fast enough. She is not thinking of herself, bless her. I wonder who she's thinking of? One of those fellows in their flannels. Idiots! with nothing but bits to leg and catches got or missed in their empty heads. I beg your pardon, Miss Meadows, I am very sorry. I hope I did not hurt a ribbon or a feather."

"You are very busy to talk of feathers and ribbons. You have hurt me. Where are you going with your head over your shoulder? Who are you gazing at?"

"Look here," cried the young man, drawing her aside. "Look at that girl's face. What is she, a Cecilia or a real young Madonna intent upon the angel? No, perhaps she is not exactly beautiful. I don't care for your beautiful faces, all feature and nothing else."

"Oswald! I when you do nothing but rave about form, Greek, forsooth! As if good English flesh and blood was not finer than your marbles!"

"Miss Meadows, you were always a woman of the most just ideas. Precisely what I think. Look at her! the features are not much, but the expression is divine. I should like to paint her. I should like to carry her off. I should like to—"

"Not eat her I hope, though your eyes look like it—fear, hush! here is her mother," cried Elinor. Mr. Oswald Fane started, and grew red, and drew back a step. He turned to the other face behind him in which he was not so interested; the other face behind him had been all that he was thinking of and yet that, too, if painting had been all that he was thinking of! Mrs. Tremenehere had not heard what was going on between the others. She, too, was absorbed, thinking only of one thing—how Vera would look at her, what she should see in the child's eyes. The young man gave a glance at her, then turned back to the first object of his admiration.

"Is it only that they resemble each other," he whispered. "or what gives them both that rapt look? It is interesting—Do you know them?—I should like to be you. I wonder if that girl is like her face."

"If you are patient and wait, perhaps I may introduce you," said Elinor. "I don't know that she is like her face. That is one side of her. Wait—I must introduce her mother to her first."

"Introduce—her mother?"

"Hush! It's a story. I'll tell it you afterwards.—Ada, come! you are wasting all the morning, and I tell you she expects you. That is what she is looking for."

"She is looking for her brother," said Mrs. Tremenehere, "and it is quite right, I don't complain. Stand by me, Nelly. I feel very silly, as if I might make a scene."

"Don't make a scene whatever you do!" cried Elinor.

"Nonsense, there is nothing so dreadful about it. Come." Vera's attention was aroused a moment after by the shock of finding a hand laid upon hers. She looked up quickly with a start, and saw the mother of whom she had seen so little, and whom at the first moment she scarcely recognised, standing beside her. The girl's heart gave a violent jump—sudden tears came into her eyes, and a choking in her throat.

"Mamma?" she said, interrogatively. The shock brought all the blood to her heart. She looked wistfully, anxiously at this sudden claimant. Miss Campbell sat looking on, somewhat uneasy. She had never believed in the pretence about Mrs. Tremenehere's separation from her husband. Incompatibility! It was no use telling a woman of her experience this. She looked at the stranger with a mixture of disapproval and dislike, and bent forward across the carriage, as if to ask what she wanted, pretending she did not know.

"Yes," said Mrs. Tremenehere, taking her daughter's hand between her own, and holding it closely, "I have been looking for you, Vera."

What was in Vera's face? Her eyes were not so limpid, so frankly and tenderly eager as when she gazed at her brother; a shadow was over the young countenance—but what? Mrs. Tremenehere could not tell what it was that clouded her eyes.

"Oh, mamma! you will get into the carriage, won't you?" she said, trying to open the door.

"I will stand here and talk to you a little. Stop down and give me a kiss, Vera, my darling," cried the poor woman.

Vera put down her soft, youthful face, upon which the same doubtful, wondering, troubled expression still hung. She did not know what to think. Her brother—yes, that was right, that was nature. But her mother? Could she sit here and let her stand by her. Should not she get out, and follow her, and cease to be a stranger to her; or should she be cold and keep back and take papa's part? Vera did not know what to do. The triumphant satisfaction died out of her face. Eddy was the sunshine of this picture, but her mother was the inevitable shadow. She put her soft face down to meet Mrs. Tremenehere's kiss, but raised it again tingling with blushes, as if it had been a stranger who had kissed her. She could not look at her brother again, with this figure at her elbow. Ought she not to give her entire attention to the new-comer? So many emotions chased each other over her face that the young man in the crowd who was still looking at her gazed in his pockets instinctively for a pencil, and then laughed at himself. "Draw all that—a whole volume in two lines!" he said to himself. "What a fool I am."

"Vera, you have grown almost a woman—"

"Yes, mamma. She made a little pause, panting in her agitation and bewilderment, which poor Mrs. Tremenehere feared was reluctance to give her that title. This went to her heart, but she would not show it. She began bravely again.

"And Eddy is almost a man. You are like each other; he has grown sterner and taller than I expected. You are pleased to see him, Vera? and of course you have got his colours. Poor boy, I suppose he is very happy with all these people staring at him; and that pleases you too?"

"Pleases me! oh more than that. I am so proud I don't know what to say, no word is strong enough. Are not you proud and happy, too, mamma?"

"I proud and happy? I don't know, my darling, I do not use such words. I am pleased that you are all pleased—"

"Oh, mamma! What could you wish, what could you have more?" said Vera, indignant with fire in her eyes.

"Vera, I beg you will not be so vehement. It is quite out of place," said Miss Campbell with dignity, "in a well-bred girl."

The blood rushed to Mrs. Tremenehere's face. She felt herself stung to the very heart. Of all that had happened to her this reproach, addressed by another woman to her child in her presence, was, I think, the very hardest blow she had yet had to bear. She made a strenuous effort to command herself. "I must beg pardon," she said, "for forgetting Miss Campbell in the agitation of seeing Vera for the first time after a long separation; and I owe you many, many thanks for your good offices to my child." She held out her hand across Vera. Miss Campbell touched the tips of her fingers with reluctance. All very well to talk of incompatibility! She, an experienced woman, felt sure that there was more in it than that, and she did not like to touch the erring woman, even with her finger tips.

"I wish Vera would profit more by my lessons; but it is a thankless task," she said.

"Mamma," said Vera, "it is impossible that I can sit here and see you standing there; either you must come into the carriage or I must get down; this sort of thing cannot be!"

At this moment, however, another personage came suddenly (Continued on page 10.)

(Continued from page 12.)

on the scene, whose appearance stilled Vera and had the strongest effect upon her mother. Mr. Tremenehere, with Edward's colour in his buttonhole, and a glow of pleasure on his face which smoothed away all harshness from it. He came up to his wife with outstretched hands. "How do you do, Ada? I am very glad to see you looking so well," he said heartily, "though here you are, triumphing over me with your boy."

"Triumphing over you? I had no such meaning." It seemed impossible not to contradict him, do what she would. She saw this, and her voice sank a little. Then she said with a smile: "He is your boy as well as mine."

"I am taking all the credit of him, I assure you," he said. "I never thought Eddy would have turned out so well. He does you credit. The most prominent young person in England for the moment; to be sure it won't last long, but still it is always something. Look at Vera, as proud as a little peacock!"

"What an idiot the man is!" whispered Oswald Fane, behind backs, to Elinor Meadows; for they were all within hearing, and quite innocently so in consequence of the crowd, "he means like a little white dove."

"Not such a dove either," said Elinor. "Vera has a spirit—but she has a dragon by her side, and is kept down dreadfully, poor little darling."

"I wish mine might be the hand to free her."

"What do you say? Oswald, she is too young to flirt. Promise me you will attempt no flirtation if I introduce you. She is only a child, and you are, as you know, not so—"

"Angelic as I ought to be," he answered, laughing. "No, I promise you, on my honour, there shall be no flirtation properly so-called. But stop—if I can make her like me? I won't deceive you."

"Then I shan't introduce you at all," said Elinor, pulling back from her forehead those gray curls, like a child's, which the wind kept ruffling out.

"I want mamma to come into the carriage, please," said Vera.

"Of course, she must," Mr. Tremenehere cried, opening the door, "and you are coming home with us, the boy and you? Nobody can have so good a claim upon you. Where are you staying—with Elinor Meadows? Well, she shall come too; and you will tell me, Ada, if you approve of my work as much as I approve of yours. Come, Vera will be unhappy otherwise—and so shall I."

Mrs. Tremenehere kept asking herself all this time whether the serves of a woman like herself, always strong and steady, as she liked to think them, were to be less under command than the nerves of a man. If he took it as a matter of course, must not she do the same? But it cost her an effort—for sentiment, perhaps, in all circumstances has more power, whether she will own it or not, over a woman than over a man. She answered, however, cheerfully, after that struggle.

"To be sure—it is the natural arrangement. Eddy will be very glad to spend an evening with his sister—and I—"

Nobody heard the end of the sentence. Her husband had given her his hand to help her into the carriage; where she sat down by the side of Miss Campbell, who did not budge, and who kept thinking to herself with *new* disregard of grammar—

"Me to be sitting by the side of a woman compromised!" And there Mrs. Tremenehere sat for the first half hour in a sort of dream, Vera opposite to her, all apparently as it might have been had she never deserted her home; apparently yet without any reality in the appearance. By and bye old friends began to find her out, and one brought another to greet and congratulate her.

"All made up, I suppose?" these visitors whispered to Elinor Meadows as they passed. "About business altogether!" But no one was privy except Miss Campbell, who scarcely condescended to notice the mother of her charge. As for Mr. Tremenehere, he went about among the crowd radiant. "Tremenehere must be a relative of yours," his friends said to him.

"Yes—only my son," he said, his countenance expanding. Eddy might have attained a much more substantial success without pleasing him half so much. Pride very often puts on the disguise of love, so that one cannot tell them apart. Mr. Tremenehere had thought but little of Eddy hitherto; he took all the credit, as he said, and really felt that he had everything to do with the boy. A boy who had put himself in the front so easily, and was for the moment the observed of all observers, the very centre to which was directed the gaze of society, was indisputably a son of whom every parent was entitled to be proud.

CHAPTER VII.

A DINNER AT HYDE PARK SQUARE

I do not know by what charm Miss Meadows had been gained over to tell a fib, and enact a whole little drama of domestic perfidy; but she did it. When Mr. Tremenehere in his satisfaction asked her to dinner she told him unblushingly that she had just invited young Oswald Fane, a connection of Lord Fanebury's, a very clever young man, in whom she took a great interest, to dine with her, and did not see how she could put him off. "Clever young men were always Elinor's weakness," said Mr. Tremenehere, so intoxicated with his own contentment that he forgot for the moment that it was not his habit to call Miss Meadows by her Christian name. "But if he is one of the Faneburys I know his uncle. Bring him with you. That will make it all right."

And thus accidentally Oswald Fane was introduced into Hyde Park Square. He was not so near a relation of Lord Fanebury as Mr. Tremenehere in his moment of elation was ready to suppose. As he waited till his son had changed his dress, and walked out with him to the crowded streets, feeling sure that everybody he met knew that the blushing youth was the hero of the day, that proud father was ready to receive as a heir presumptive at the least, anybody who might have been presented to him. His gratified pride threw a radiance over all the world. He was for the time being the most proud of fathers, the most kind of men. He put his arm through Eddy's, who was two inches taller than himself, with that delightful mixture of the familiar friend with the father which everybody says it is so pleasant to see, and introduced him to several men they met, with overflowing satisfaction. Then when they got out of the lingering crowd, away into the more quiet streets, Mr. Tremenehere began to inquire into his son's hopes and intentions for the future, as a father should.

"Is this your last year at school," he said. "How old are you? Eighteen? Are you expected to stay another year?"

"I think, sir," said Edward, "that my mother means me to leave and go to Oxford at once. But—I don't think anything is settled. If you thought—"

"I have left all that to your mother," said Mr. Tremenehere. "That was a bargain, and I don't mean to interfere with her. Your mother is a very sensible woman. We did not get on when

we were together, which was unfortunate, but she has managed admirably with you, and I approve all she does. And after Oxford, Ned, what then, my boy? What do you think of doing then?"

"Well, sir," said Eddy, "that is a thing there has been no decision about—I think my mother—"

"Yes, but in the choice of a profession one must act for one's self. What do *you* think? You will have your mother's money, of course, but it will scarcely be enough to enable you to take the position I should like to see you take. You must do something—"

"My mother's money is her own," said Edward, with a slight flush upon his face. "I don't want her to give it me. I am very willing to do something. Indeed I am not at all sure about Oxford for my part, except that she wishes it. For you ought to know, sir," he added, looking down with another flush of colour, "I am not clever; good enough as a bat and that sort of thing, but not much good in school."

"Is that so?" said Mr. Tremenehere. But he said it without anything of that half shame, half pity, both sentiments generally concealed by a carelessness, with which the women among whom Edward Tremenehere had been brought up regarded his want of success in school. The boy had learned to divine this, though nobody ever put it into words, and the easy tone of his father cheered and eased him in the most wonderful way. Was it then perhaps not so humiliating after all to be without cleverness? Might a fellow still do something though he could not get Greek and Latin into his head, and had no hope of a scholarship? Edward felt cheered and encouraged he could scarcely tell why.

"Yes, I am afraid it is so. I have got such a bad memory or something. I do my work, but it goes out of my head again just as fast. That is why I think it is money wasted sending me to Oxford."

"Not at all," said Mr. Tremenehere. "It is not for work alone that men go to Oxford. It always tells well in society. Not a high degree, or honours, or anything of that sort; for unless you are going into a profession the world cares very little for Senior Wranglers, &c. But you make friends who can help you in life, and widen your acquaintance, and learn a great deal that is quite as important. Yes, yes, you must go to college; but after? as I asked before—"

"I don't know, sir," said Edward, "my mother used to talk of the Bar, not knowing how stupid I was. But that would never do. I don't seem to have any particular choice; anything that pleases other people—"

"You are too good, I am afraid," said his father. "Your mother can't go on thinking for you—"

"So she says," said the boy with a laugh. At this moment they met a group of other lads with blue ribbons who stared at Eddy's appearance here; he nodded to them with a look of dejection. "The rest of the fellows are dining together," he said. "It is rather fun; but I don't suppose I shall mind."

"And you came away without telling me! That was kind of you, Ned. But I hope you will enjoy yourself with us. You will see a great difference in Vera. She is almost grown up, and I shall soon have to think of getting her brought out and introduced into society, which is a great bore for me. So you see we all have our difficulties. I am still in that same old house which you remember. It will be pleasant to dine together this one night."

"Yes," said Edward, somewhat disconsolately. He would have liked the dinner with his comrades better, but he was too good to put his own wishes forward. And Mr. Tremenehere thought no more about it. He told him of several young potatoes at Oxford whom he should introduce him to. And I hope you will be very careful about the set you get into. Whatever you may do in the way of scholarship you must never be indifferent to the art of making friends."

"That is what my mother says," said the lad, a statement which made his father stare. "She says that if I get into a good reading set—"

Mr. Tremenehere laughed. "That is very like your mother," he said, "but not exactly what I meant. If you are weak in scholarship don't go in for it, my boy. What I mean is a good set of men, men whom it will be of use for you to know, who may give you a helping hand in life, or at least in society. A great deal depends on that."

"Yes," said Eddy dutifully. "A good set of men" sounded much better to him than "the reading set," of whom he had been thinking with some alarm; but he did not so well understand about the "helping hand in life" to which his father referred. He was a perfectly humble simple-minded fellow, but yet he was not without a certain pride of his own.

Thus they went home to Hyde Park Square, where Mrs. Tremenehere, agitated by many thoughts, was preparing for dinner in her old room, now empty, swept, and garnished, and asking herself various questions which she could not answer, which she did not like even to put in words. There was a little pause when they all came together in the drawing-room, a little holding of the breath, or so she thought. It was late and beginning to be twilight, and I cannot describe with what a strange thrill of curiosity Edward looked at his two parents thus brought together. What could they be thinking, these two people who belonged to each other, yet did not belong to each other? And—whose fault was it? The boy was instinctively respectful and dutiful, and made no reply to himself, but yet the question arose in his mind whether he would or not.

"I have been speaking to Ned about his future," said Mr. Tremenehere. "He does not seem to be very clear what he is to do after Oxford."

"No. We must let circumstances decide," said his mother.

"Perhaps if he reads hard—"

"My dear Ada, I wouldn't interfere with you for the world, but why should he read if that is not the turn of his mind?" said Mr. Tremenehere.

"It is the turn his mind ought to take," she said. "It is the only use so far as I can see of a University. What were colleges instituted for but reading? And it is his duty as well as the best thing to do."

"Well, I think there are other uses for Universities," said Mr. Tremenehere. "Is that you, Vera? Come here; your mother cannot see you in this light. You would not think, would you," he added, with some pride, "that this demure little person was the saucy Vera who used to poke her small fingers into everything?" He laid his hand upon her head caressingly—not that he was much in the habit of caressing her, but he felt a natural impulse to put forth his own predilection as it were by the side of his wife's, in an amiable rivalry which had no evil intention in it. For, indeed, though he felt proud of his son, and was pleased with him, he was not at all jealous of his son's mother, to whom the boy specially belonged, and could not have understood the sharp and keen jealousy of himself, almost bitter, which shot like an arrow through Mrs. Tremenehere's heart as he laid his hand on Vera's head.

"I had no objections to the saucy Vera," she said, hurriedly forcing herself to smile.

"Ah, that is not my ideal of a young woman," said the father, equally unaware how much of the original leaven remained in the demure little person of whose quietness he was so proud.

Mrs. Tremenehere restrained herself as by force and made no reply, though all the old lively impulses of contradiction seemed to spring up in her as she listened; and thus the divided family remained for a moment silent, the father and son standing together, the mother and daughter seated in the shadow. Miss Campbell kept apart at the farthest window with a book in her hand. She disapproved profoundly of Mrs. Tremenehere. What did she want in this house which she had left of her own accord? Did she mean to come back disturbing other people in the established routine of their life, perhaps turning the carefully-trained Vera into something fast and disorderly? Such a woman was capable of anything, Miss Campbell thought, and the poor lady had an excuse for her dislike in her growing alarm and terror. She had a very comfortable position in Mr. Tremenehere's house, and was fond of Vera in her way, and if she left Hyde Park Square there was at her age little before her, except poor genteel lodgings on a small annuity, or the "Home."

When Miss Meadows came in with young Fane, followed at a moment's interval by the stray man, adapted to fill a place at an emergency, whom Mr. Tremenehere had met at Lord's, the family were not sorry. Perhaps, on the whole, it was more easy to get on when there were strangers present. There was an awkward moment, however, when they went to dinner. Mr. Tremenehere went across the room to Miss Campbell before the procession started.

"Perhaps," he said, in a slightly nervous tone, "it would be better if Vera took the head of the table to-day?"

"It must be exactly as you please, Mr. Tremenehere," she replied stiffly, giving him no assistance. And then he had to give his wife his arm, and hand her downstairs.

"You are the greatest stranger, Ada," he cried, with a nervous laugh, and attempt at jestiness. "The guest of the evening!"

She did not say anything, but put her hand within his arm as if she had been in a dream. But after that, the small party round the dinner-table went on quite smoothly. Vera, her cheeks burning, sat at the head of the table, feeling wretched, ashamed, and proud. She could not bear to look at her mother, who ought to have been occupying that place, and yet could look at nothing else, not even at Eddy, who kept smiling at her, shy but genial. She did not even notice, for five minutes at least, the handsome countenance of Oswald Fane at her left hand, though it was one which few girls of Vera's age looked at with absolute indifference. He had one of those picturesque dark faces which physiognomists suspect and sentimentalists love; dark eyes, liquid and persuasive, capable of looking utterable things; dark hair, curling crisply round a well-shaped head; a smile on the curved lips, just shaded with a soft line of moustache which no unsuspecting person could resist. And he had judgment to add to his personal attractions. He saw Vera's agitation, and neither spoke nor looked at her for these five minutes, but chattered pleasantly to Elinor Meadows, shielding her from observation. Then when Vera began to get used to her position, and to calm out of her excitement, he threw over Elinor and struck in:

"You were very much interested in the match to-day, Miss Tremenehere. Was it for the sake of cricket? Some ladies, I know, are great connoisseurs—"

"Oh, no! I don't know anything about cricket. My brother was playing."

"I know; and I knew that was the reason, if you will let me say so. Cricketing young ladies don't look as you looked."

"How did I look? Not very odd I hope?" said Vera.

"Miss Campbell says I am always showing my feelings."

"I must not trust myself to description," he said. "Your look raised very violent emotions in my mind. Yes, I may as well confess. I turned immediately to the men in the field, and I said to myself, 'A set of wretched schoolboys. What have they done, I wonder, with their stupid game that any idiot could play, to deserve that!'"

"Mr. Fane! I hope you don't mean what you say," cried Vera, indignantly, raising her head, "because I am Edward's sister. No one ought to speak like that, knowing that my brother is Captain of the Eleven."

"I told you, you had raised diabolical passions in my breast," said Fane, unmoved. "Envy, hatred, and jealousy; because you see, I knew very well that if I were to do the greatest feat that a man could do, no one would look so at me."

"Ah!" said Vera, mollified, drawing a breath of relief; "then you have no sister," she added softly, looking at him for the first time with interest.

Here I think it was the duty of Elinor to have interfered; but she was much amused; and she was, as she avowed boldly, half in love herself, in an elderly fashion, with Oswald Fane.

"No," he said, "I am all alone in the world. It does not matter to any one what I do or what I don't do; so you must forgive me my grudge at that happy fellow you were watching. I did not intend him any harm."

"Eddy played very well to-day," said the friend of the family, who sat at Vera's right hand. "Made a good score. Saved that last innings, he did. I don't like to see my old school brats, though I'm an old fellow. I give you leave to be proud of your brother, Vera. I never saw a neater catch. It made a man feel young again."

"I am very proud of him, thanks," said Vera beaming. She looked at Eddy almost for the first time. His face was very serious, poor fellow. He was sitting next to Miss Campbell, who addressed instructive conversation to him, as she thought it was her duty to do with the young. And alas, I fear, poor Eddy, though he was at home, with all the members of his family round him, was thinking ruefully of the gay dinner at which the others were drinking their toasts and making their speeches. This certainly was not so lively. He did not see Vera look at him, but he met his mother's eye, and smiled, with a slight shrug of the shoulders. Vera saw this pantomime, and was angry. Was he not glad to be at home?

Thus the dinner was not the greatest of successes; and the ordeal of the drawing-room was still more severe. Mr. Tremenehere walked up to his wife when he came upstairs, and sat down beside her.

"I could not say anything to you at dinner," he said. "Ada! but I want now just to say a word. Don't press the scholarship business upon Ned. You can afford to send him to Oxford, and he can afford to go; that is, he is young enough not to be losing his time; but don't worry him and strain him to do something out of his line altogether. There, I don't want to interfere; but this you must let me say."

"Thank you," she said, a little stiffly. "I will think of it, Charles. Of course your advice in respect to Eddy must always have the greatest weight."

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"Well, yes, I think it ought," said the father, "especially as there has never been any quarrel, so to speak, between us. We have always been quite good friends."

"Perfectly good friends: if you will allow me in my turn to make a remark, I think poor Vera's natural vivacity is too much repressed. Miss Campbell, I have no doubt, is a very good woman, but Vera will never be really one of those much-loved whom you admire. She has a great deal of energy and spirit in her. I think you should take care not to carry the subduing process too far."

"Ah!" he said, raising his eyebrows, "do you think so? I should not have supposed that would have occurred to you. Miss Campbell's process seems to me to have answered admirably. However, I will keep my eye upon her since you think so. Curious! I expected you to compliment me, as everybody does."

"Yes, and so I do; she has grown up very sweet and fair," she said, with some emotion.

"But only you don't approve of the way in which she has been brought up," he said, with a laugh. "Well, well, we never did agree, and it is evident we never intend to agree, Ada; which does not, however, prevent me from giving, as you say, the greatest weight to your advice, and from our continuing the best of friends."

With this he grasped her hand heartily, and rising from his chair beside her, went off to talk to Edward, whom old Mr. Caraby was cross-questioning. Mrs. Tremenehere sat alone for a time. Near the open window, with its long lace curtains swaying softly in the summer air, sat Vera beside Miss Meadows, looking up into the dark, handsome face of young Fane, who bent over her. I don't think it occurred to the mother to take any notice of young Fane. She had subjects enough to occupy her mind without that. But whether by inadvertence or purpose, I cannot tell which, Elinor Meadows rose up suddenly, and came and joined her, leaving the two young people together—Miss Campbell, not being able to put up with this overturn of all her habits, having left the room.

"Well," said Elinor, eagerly, "have you settled anything? Indeed you ought to have come to your senses, you two, at your age."

"Perhaps we ought," said Mrs. Tremenehere, "but nothing is changed that I can see. Age makes little difference. For Vera's sake I might risk it, but he has no such idea; he is too triumphant in his own success."

"Then nothing is to come of it; what was the good then?" cried Elinor, with tears in her eyes. "Ada! Ada! I thought you would have done anything for poor little Vera's sake."

"I suppose it is only justice," said Mrs. Tremenehere, with a slight faltering, "when he would have made it up I wouldn't; and now when perhaps—I don't know—I might—"

"Is that all you say? when of course you would, that or anything else, for Vera's sake?"

"Well, put it as you please; but anyhow it would be a failure. We should begin again to contradict each other the very next day. However, it is needless to discuss the question, for he does not wish it; that is as clear as daylight."

A little while after the two halves of the divided family said goodbye to each other, and the mother and son went back to their separate lodgings with Elinor, like any other visitors.

"Well, Eddy, have you spent a happy evening?" said Miss Meadows, in the darkness of the carriage, driving home.

"Oh, happy? well enough," said Edward. "Of course I was glad to see my father and Vera; still it was a bore not to be at the dinner with the other fellows, and this my last year."

The next step after this strange family meeting was taken in all innocence, with no thought of the complications it might lead to. Mr. Tremenehere consented that Vera should pay a visit to her mother in the country, under the charge of Elinor Meadows. It was to be for two days only, too short a time to have much effect upon the girl, one way or another—Miss Meadows, however, did not tell any one that on her own responsibility she had offered a seat in her carriage, and an introduction into her friend's house, to Oswald Fane.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE VILLA.

MRS. TREMENEHERE rather prided herself on her society; though she had given up so much she had never given up that; the people she knew were not commonplace people such as you meet everywhere, but persons of high intelligence, of advanced opinions, people known in literature, in art, and in science. Her parties were generally in summer, daylight parties, a combination of outdoor pleasures, concluding with that good dinner which mortal men, even when they are philosophers, love. When the little party arrived from town they found preparations going on for one of these gatherings. Mrs. Tremenehere took Vera through the garden and shady grounds, which were skillfully planted to look double their size, and showed her everything with tender anxiety. "You must help me to receive my friends," she said, smiling upon her little daughter.

"What would Miss Campbell say? she is not 'out,' of course," said Elinor.

"A girl does not require to be 'out' when she is by her mother's side," said Mrs. Tremenehere with a sigh, drawing Vera's hand within her arm. It was not for Vera she said this, but for the relief of her own mind; but Vera heard it, and ventured to clasp her mother's arm with a sudden sense of security, such as she thought she had never experienced before. By her mother's side—very different from Miss Campbell's; everything was made natural, everything as it ought to be, by that one fact. She turned round without knowing why, and met Fane's dark eyes fixed upon her; never before had innocent Vera met such looks; and a soft suffusion, the first blush of tenderest youth, came over her white throat and delicate cheeks. She clung a little closer to her mother's arm. Yes, even this, the confused sweet guiltiness, the innocent shame where no shame was, all were without danger, without harm there—by her mother's side.

Then the strangers began to arrive, but first of all came Edward, fresh from school, happy and radiant in the delight of "leave," and the whole day to himself, though not so happy about "the party."

"To be sure we can have some croquet," said Edward, "though that is not much; but with such a terrible set of swells what else can one do?"

"There is a swell coming who will fascinate you, Eddy," said his mother. The lad shrugged his shoulders with a laugh.

"All right if they please you, mamma," he said, putting his arm round her with a happy ease which made Vera wonder. Fancy any one doing that to papa, she said to herself—or Miss Campbell! After a while Edward dragged her off to see the croquet-ground, where the excitement of that diversion was all in order. "Between ourselves it is a bore each," he said; "a

lot of bigwigs all talking as if to talk was the best thing in the world; but never mind, it pleases the mother. And then a day's leave is always a day's leave," he added, with good-humoured philosophy. It was Edward's disposition to make the best of everything.

"And I have a day's leave, too," said Vera, with a little sigh; "but I can't have one whenever I please, Eddy, like you." "Whenever I please!" he looked at her with natural contempt for her ignorance; but then what can a girl be expected to know? "Why can't you stay?" he said; "it would be much jollier if you were here. Why can't we all live together, as we used to do—as we ought to do?" the boy added, suddenly.

This conversation was interrupted by the appearance of Fane, who was never long absent from Vera's elbow, and by the gradual arrival of the visitors—among whom, as I have said, there was one celebrity of the moment whom it was a very great honour to produce here so far out of town. While the young people were in the garden Elinor Meadows came rushing towards them, her black lace billowing around her, and the rings of her grey hair blown about her forehead.

"Come!" she cried, breathless, "come, before there is a crowd, and be introduced to him, both of you. You, too, Oswald, if you like,—only make haste and come."

"Who is it?" they all asked in a breath. "It is the lion—and a real great roaring lion, shaking his mane—none of your make-believes, that don't know how to keep it up. It is Mr. Buckram Bass, the great African traveller. He has been everywhere where nobody ever was before. Come, you foolish boys and girls. You may never have another such opportunity. Come, Vera; and Edward especially,—you must come."

"Presently. I shall see him soon enough," said Edward.

He would not come in. He was busy out of doors, looking after the croquet, showing the inner points of view to one way or another, pointing out the pinnacles of the distant great school in the distance, telling the names of the distant places, and also the names of the notabilities present to his mother's guests.

"That is Dr. Jones, the great geologist, I believe—and that lady yonder, in the corner with a lot of people round her, is the lady that plays the fiddle—well, yes, violin, it's all the same, isn't it? I daresay my mother will get her to play after dinner. And that is the Bishop of St. James's, who is an old friend of my mother's."

"Will he preach after dinner?" said some one, hoping to be witty.

"I hope not," said Edward, gravely. "I don't think he is a fool, nor my mother either. There is the editor of the 'Northern,' whom you may have heard of, and Miss Cloets, who writes novels. By the way, I believe there is somebody here who is the very last novelty in the way of travels, The great African man, that—"

"Hush!" said Elinor Meadows, by his side.

"Why should he hush? I wish he had described me as well as he described the rest," said Mr. Buckram Bass himself, stepping into the circle. "This is Mrs. Tremenehere's son, the hero of the cricket, and why has he not been introduced to me? There spoke the true spirit of youth! not feelings!—When his time comes, ladies, he will experience them, at present he does not care to have any babbling about them. Bravo! those are my sentiments exactly. Let us shake hands upon it. Yes, what is worth it doing—not to talk, not to read, but to do. Schools! yes, schools are excellent. I do not say a word against schools. I myself was not created by any school, but what does that matter? When I was your age I rebelled against books. I felt myself a slave. To tie me down," cried the lion, roaring loudly, and grasping his red beard—he was a large man, handsome, and even commanding in appearance, and when he spoke, took a large handful of the vast beard which he had grown during his travels—"to tie me down with all my energies fettered, to construe Herodotus! when I knew there were things in the world more wonderful than Herodotus—and true."

Edward had looked at him, half contemptuously, half suspiciously when he began. Gradually, however, his looks changed. His eyes began to laugh, then to glow. The big man and his beard impressed him. "More wonderful than Herodotus—and true!" He forgot his natural opposition to the lion. After all, if this was a lion, he was so because of what he had done, not of what he had said or written. He began to look eagerly at this new kind of man.

"Do you know anything about Africa?" said the traveller. "No! The great continent of the future!—the real new world, teeming with wealth, full of wonder, from which there is everything to expect. Take a walk with me through your mother's pretty grounds. That moment that his face I see, I know the man that must hear me."

With this the adventurer thrust his great arm through Edward's and led him away, half pleased, half reluctant. The others who stood round heard his big voice discoursing as he promenade through the shrubbery.

Nothing more was seen of Eddy that day, except at dinner, during which he was very absent and distrustful, straining his attention to make out what Mr. Buckram Bass was saying at the other end of the table. He reappeared in the evening, but only in the train of the traveller, who was delighted by the boy's enthusiasm. Few people noticed even then that it was Edward he was talking, for the talk was addressed to the whole gathering, as well as to that one particular boy who stood close by him, his eyes gleaming, his whole aspect changed.

"Yes, yes, you are right, and I respect you for it," said the traveller. "This is not a time for music, for the fine arts, for poetry, and feeling. What men want is to be doing. You know where I am going to—what I call the Continent of the future, that great mysterious Africa, to one corner of which the roots of our religion itself still cling. Is it not a work worthy of Christianity to carry freedom and civilisation back to the warm, rich, teeming countries where so much wealth and capability lie dormant? Yes, sir, take the question at its lowest, nothing could be more admirable for trade. In that view alone it is worth doing—opening up not a single nation like France or Germany, but a crowd of nations, a whole continent, to British enterprise. But I don't profess myself to take that point of view. My mind is burdened with the thought of so many fine interesting races, so many tribes and peoples, as varied as Europeans, not stupid negroes only, who are living in mud cabins, under savage laws, decimated by fever and by each other, whom we might help with a little trouble into civilisation and humanity. My expedition starts in October. It is not all filled up. How thankful I should be to have volunteers, sportsmen, adventurers, whatever you please to call them. Every new traveller is so much gain."

"For heaven's sake, Ada, do something to stop that man," cried Elinor Meadows in Mrs. Tremenehere's ear. "Ask somebody to play; let us do something."

"Why? I find him very interesting," said Mrs. Tremenehere,

smiling calmly in her friend's face, "and he always does this, you know, wherever he goes. It is easily understood."

"Look at Edward's face!"

"Yes, he is interested, poor boy. I am so glad that he should have had his mind roused by some new subject." Edward stood by his new apostle, his eyes fixed upon him, swallowing every word with eager interest. Already he saw himself in imagination with a wild retinue of Arabs and negroes tramping through the jungle, pressing over the sands, passing from one savage court to another. He had read all the books upon the subject eagerly, but here was a man who was a living book, who had seen and heard and done, and was about to do again, all these wonders. Edward's mind, newly aroused within him, expanded and grew. He seemed to feel himself grow strong and daring and patient as he listened. Yes, that was the life—not a sham life at college, making good friends as his father said, or labouring vainly after scholarship as his mother wished.

CHAPTER IX.

THE VILLA (continued).

MEANWHILE the day had passed for Vera like a strange sweet dream, too rapid, too full of feeling to be understood. The novelty and the strangeness and the complication of emotions so suddenly introduced into her young life, which had been carefully trained to know no emotions at all, involved her in a secret bewilderment, so that she did not seem to know what she was saying, or on what she was treading, whether enchanted ground, or air, or clouds. When she was about to follow the rest indoors, Fane, who was with her, begged so hard that she would stay, that Vera, not unwilling, though a little doubtful as to whether she ought, softly sat down again on the rustic seat under the lime trees, which were so sweet in the dimness of the night. Fane said nothing for a few minutes; he let the silence and charm of the night steal into the girl's soul.

"I wanted to drive on for ever this morning," at last he said softly; "what a mistake it was! But now, if this night were only last for ever! I don't know what more one could wish for. Do you remember 'The Last Ride'?"

"What is 'The Last Ride'?" said Vera, wondering if it was very, very ignorant of her not to know.

"It is a poem of Mr. Browning's," said Vera, shyly. "It seems dreadful to say so, but you ought to be allowed. It is so stiff and so formal, not like anything natural."

"What have you read? I think I could show you some you would like."

"I have read some of Pope, and Miss Campbell is very fond of Young's 'Night Thoughts,' and Kirke White—and a little Cowper. I like Cowper best, but—"

"Ah!" he said. "Shall I tell you about the 'Last Ride'?"

It is very different from Pope. It is a poor lover whom his lady has refused. He loves her, but she does not love him. Yet though she does not love him, she is sweet and gracious, and will not refuse the last thing he asks of her,—one last ride with him. And so they set out; and as they go along he keeps comforting himself all the way, knowing every step is nearer the end—Perhaps the world may end to-night."

"And what happens?" asked Vera, eagerly.

"Nothing happens; the ride may be going on still for all one knows."

Vera was silent. She was too young to understand how this ending of the world might have helped the hapless lover. She sat quite still, in shy wonder, feeling sad for him; wishing that the lady had relented, which would have been better than the world ending; her thoughts entirely carried away even from the present enchantment. Then her companion spoke again; his voice was very soft and naturally melodious, and there was a certain pleading in the tone:

"I wonder," he said, "if I am to be sent away to-night."

"To be sent away?"

"Miss Meadows brought me. She is not going till to-morrow. She is as good as gold, but she is apt to forget details."

"Oh, shall I run in and ask?" cried Vera. "How disconcerting for you to be kept here. I will run and tell her."

"No, indeed, you shall not run anywhere to serve me. It is I who will run—wherever you please—to do anything you please. But don't be satirical or hard upon me. The dreadful thing will be to be sent away. I prefer to keep out of the way till it is too late."

Again Vera did not quite understand, and was silent, thinking it best not to commit herself. But she began to be a little uneasy about sitting here quite alone while everybody else had gone in. It was strangely pleasant—so warm, yet so cool, so fresh and dewy, the house so near with all its lights, yet the stillness so perfect. Would it be right, though, if not so pleasant, to go back to the house?

"Can you see beyond the garden, the lights scattered about in the houses," he said, "and up in the sky the stars? I don't know which I like best."

"Oh, Mr. Fane, the stars!"

"Do you think so?—but see, every one of these little lights twinkling away far down at the foot of the hill means something. There are people there talking, living—with a story of one kind or another—and love. Is it not pleasant?" he said, as she made no answer, "to sit here and watch it all—the other people going on with their living, and we looking on?"

"But we are living too, said Vera, startled.

"Beginning to live—"

He did not say any more. And how still it was—every little rustle in the leaves audible, though there was so much life and sound close at hand. Vera began to feel a little frightened. All these strangenesses seemed coming to a climax. She gave a little start when some watchful bird made a stir among the branches, and got up. "I think mamma may want me. I think we should go in," she said.

More than half the people were gone, however, when they went in, and the last train was gone, and there was nothing for it but to offer Mr. Fane, whom Elinor Meadows confessed she had forgotten, a bed. Vera coming in shy and dazzled by the lights did not quite listen to all that was said; but to know that he was going to stay was pleasant. He sat down by her again, while her mother was occupied with the last of the departing groups. Somehow she seemed to know him better than any one—better even than her mother, to whom she was so much a stranger; and here indoors, with so many people about, it was easier to talk. She confessed to him with a little blush that she had never been here before.

"Is it not strange?" she said, "it is home, as much as the Square, and yet I don't know it. People are not often like that. I suppose you used to live with your mother when you were young, as young as I am—most people do."



"AN ODD COUPLE"—VERA AND HER DOLLS

"Try and sit up like a lady," she said. "If you are all good, and don't make a noise, nor spoil your gummies, I will tell you a story."



"AN ODD COUPLE"—THE ETON AND HARROW CRICKET MATCH

kind. I know the family you speak of—a very good family, but I cannot claim them as near relations. There is some far cousinship no doubt. It is gratifying to my feelings that they should know—I mean remember me; and have you seen them lately Mr.—Mr. Vane?"

"Fane. I met them in Scotland last year; indeed, I was at their house for a few days. What a pleasant place to visit is a Highland country-house! Of course you remember your cousin's delightful place?"

"Yes—yes—that is, I have been there very seldom. Mr. Fane; very seldom, not since a child, I may say; and no doubt there are additions and alterations."

"They said it was a long time since they had seen you, and I promised to let them know if I happened to meet you anywhere. A fortunate chance, was it not? The daughters have grown up charming girls, and as for Hector and Colin—"

"Yes—yes," said Miss Campbell. She was for the moment quite bamboozled; was he trying to deceive her, or was it really true that the Highland magnates, whose names alone she was acquainted with, had found out and recognised her as their kinswoman? After the first flash of gratification she became uncertain, and did not know what to think. He had turned, and was walking along with them. But he walked by Miss Campbell's side, taking no notice of Vera, who for her part went along with downcast eyes, offended and never looking at him.

"By the way," he said, "Miss Meadows, who is out of town for a few days, gave me some books for Miss Tremaine. May I bring them? I am going away myself shortly. One day this week may I bring them and discharge my conscience of my commission before I go?"

"Oh, pray do not take the trouble. I will send a servant," said Miss Campbell, who had seen a sudden lighting of Vera's eyes. "This is our way, I think. Do not take the trouble. I must bid you good morning, Mr. Fane."

And he took his leave of them quite calmly, though he was going away. Vera was so startled, so wounded, so suddenly thrown down out of all those sweet vague dreams in which she had been indulging, that she could not raise her eyes. Tears came so easily at sixteen. If he had really gone and she had seen no more of him, Vera, after that sharp shock of mortification and disappointment which made her poor little lip quiver and her eyes all, would no doubt have forgotten all about Oswald Fane. But in the meantime the blow of his supposed indifference and the sudden cruel cut put all at once to the romance which was just beginning, crushed her for the moment, depressed as she was by other influences. She walked home by Miss Campbell's side with a piteous little face, not saying a word. Only once a little cry of impatience burst from her. "I do not believe that gentleman knew much about my cousins of Stormway," Miss Campbell said. "I think it was very strange that he should have accused me as he did, currying favour. If he is a friend of Miss Meadows I must request her not to send her messages by him. I am sure she has plenty of servants. I must tell her I do not approve of calls from gentlemen."

"Oh, you need not give yourself the trouble," said Vera; "he is not coming. He said it was to clear his conscience of his commission. He never wanted to come."

"So much the better," said Miss Campbell dryly; and she talked about the Aquarium in the Zoological Gardens, which was a safe subject. Vera no longer trod on air; her dreams were gone and ended, her beautiful new world broken like a bubble. She went into her own room and cried, tears innocent and bitter, such as one sheds at sixteen, when every grief seems eternal. It was all over, then. Not only should she never see him more, but she had lost that sweet refuge into which she could retire as she had done this morning when the day was dull, when Miss Campbell was hard upon her.

Next morning however she had to go back to her lessons as usual. When these came to a pause before luncheon, she wandered into the drawing-room, intending to breathe forth some of her melancholy upon the grand piano. Some one rose as she went in. The girl grew red all over with a flush which was partly anger, and partly shame, and partly delight.

"Oh!" she said impetuously, not knowing what she said, "I thought you were gone."

"Did you really think so?" said Fane. "No, impossible. I came this morning that she might not have time to warn the servants not to admit me."

"But, Mr. Fane, of whom are you speaking? You seemed to know Miss Campbell so well—to like her—and her relations."

Fane laughed. Vera could not have explained what her feelings were at that moment. Her heart bounded, and yet she did not like it. Why should he deceive even Miss Campbell? She looked at him doubtfully—and yet how happy she was!

"You think I should not tell a fib? Quite true. But then how was I to see you? That was the first thing I had to think of; and there was no harm done. It was a very innocent fib. I could not give up tamely all hope of seeing you again."

Vera's cheek glowed and her heart beat. She did not say anything to check him—to demur to this statement. Was it not natural that he should want to see her? Had not she wanted too, though she would not say it, to see him?

"But you are going away?" she said softly, with a very little subdued sigh.

"Not I—not so long as there is any chance.—Here is the book I spoke to you about, and another. Take them, please, before the dragon comes; I fear, I fear, she will be here directly. Ah, Miss Tremaine, you cannot think how I have thought about those two days at the villa, and lived them over and over! Shall not you go there again, or to Miss Meadows? She knows me. She would not shut me out; and now that I have seen you it does not seem possible to live just as one lived before. Life is different. It is so much sweeter—better; since that day at Lord's, that first wonderful day. I had never seen you till then."

Vera stood silent, with the books in her hands, her eyes cast down, her cheeks glowing, her heart beating high, yet not wildly in her ears, as it had done a little while before, but with a satisfied and quiet beating. How true it all was! Life was different, quite different; and yet it did not seem right for him to say so. But to listen to him? Civility demanded that she should listen to any one who talked to her, especially when he was a visitor, and she at home.

"You are very kind, Mr. Fane," she said at last, faltering. That was not at all what she meant, but what could she say?

"Kind! It is you who are kind listening to me. Elinor Meadows would stand my friend if you were with her, and how good Mrs. Tremaine was! But what must I do with this dragon? If I tell lies to her to please her, you will disapprove of me, and that I cannot bear; but still less can I bear not to see you. What can I do?"

"Mr. Fane: oh! please, don't speak so—and you said you were going away."

"I am going away when you go," he said, "for I shall find out where you go, and follow you—don't be angry, I can't help

it,—if it is only to see the light in your window. You wouldn't like me to fall back, and be just the poor creature I was before I knew you? Yes, of course, you are angry with me for telling lies, Vera—you, who are trueh self; but the more I see you the truer I shall be. Don't give me up, because I can't give you up. You are too sweet and too good to break my heart."

All this no doubt would have seemed over-bold and over-sudden to a girl of twenty; but how could Vera discriminate, she upon whom the same spell had fallen? Did not she, too, feel how different life was, how transformed from the pale grey routine, the stagnant repression of the days before? The strangeness and excitement of it made her breathless.

"Oh! don't talk so, please don't talk so," she cried. "It is the only way I can talk," said Fane. "That is she," I saw you I knew what had happened to me. 'That is she,' I said to myself, 'that is she—there is none in all the world like her.' And—ah!—Good morning, Miss Campbell. I made bold to call to discharge my commission. Miss Tremaine has got the books—"

"Good morning," said Miss Campbell. "What books? I never permit Miss Tremaine to read anything that I have not first looked at myself."

"I have no doubt it is a very wise rule," he said, carelessly. "The books belong to Miss Meadows—it is she who sent them with them, and, of course, she is answerable. I shall say I put them into your own hands, Miss Tremaine. Any commands for Scotland, Miss Campbell? May I take tidings of you to your cousins? It would be a great pleasure to me—and I may say to me—"

Miss Campbell looked at him seriously. "Mr. Fane," she said, "I don't pretend to know what you mean by talking of my cousins, who, after all, are but distant relations upon whom I have no claim."

"What I mean is to please you, of course," said Fane, with a laugh. "What else? If they were my people I should like friends to talk of them to me."

"If that was all! But I do not forget my position; and—when a gentleman sets himself to flatter a lady in my position—"

"Flatter! Do you think it flattering to remind you of your relations? It might be so to them," said Fane, with a bow and a smile. "Never mind, I shall hold my tongue another time if you don't like the Stormway people. In the meantime I must really say goodbye. Goodbye, Miss Tremaine. I will tell Miss Meadows I saw you. And Miss Campbell, you will surely shake hands with me, and wish me luck among the grouse."

"Now, if one could only tell what that young man meant!" said Miss Campbell, when he was gone. "He seems well-bred and agreeable, but he may have a motive of his own. Vera, it is the hour for Rolin. Get your book, my dear."

CHAPTER XII ROMANCE

AFTER this there followed a very exciting interval to Vera. Fane came again with another mission (nominally) from Miss Meadows, and was tolerably received. Emboldened by this, he came a third time and a fourth, addressing most of his conversation to Miss Campbell, and describing in elaborate detail the long series of accidents which delayed him from the grouse. The Tremainees themselves generally left town in the beginning of August, but this year were later than usual. Miss Campbell found it agreeable on the whole to receive so unusual a visitor, and to hear so much about the Campbells of Stormway, whom she really began at last to believe in as her cousins. He had always some trait to relate of one or other of them when the conversation flagged, or she began to look during these visits. He gave her now and then a look, now and then a whispered word in the intervals of his talk with Miss Campbell, and left her in no doubt as to his motives for cultivating with such extreme assiduity that lady's friendship; but after all, at sixteen, it is but an indifferent pleasure to see your proper slave devoting himself to another person even if it be for your sake. Vera sat silent, and now and then for some what said. But her whole life became absorbed in these visits. She thought of them all day long. She expected him till he came, mused upon him after he was gone. Except Rolin and the lessons it was all that Vera had. Her mother wrote to her less frequently than usual, and more briefly. Mrs. Tremaine, for her part, was involved in great anxiety and trouble. "I am rather unhappy about an idea Eddy has got into his head," she wrote, as an excuse for her short letters, "but I trust it will not come to anything." Vera scarcely asked herself what this could be. She was lost in her own excitement.

One afternoon Mr. Tremaine came in a little earlier than usual, and met Fane, who was leaving after a prolonged call. They stood talking together for a few minutes at the door, and Mr. Tremaine was heard to laugh, which took a burden off the minds of both ladies in the drawing-room; for it suddenly occurred to Miss Campbell that before she knew Mr. Fane, and was aware how well he was acquainted with the Campbells of Stormway, she, too, had been a little suspicious of him, and thought him an undesirable visitor. However, nothing could be more friendly than Mr. Tremaine's tone. When he came in, however, he did not look quite so genial. He gave a half angry glance at the governess, and a doubtful one at Vera.

"Since when has young Fane become a visitor in the house?" he asked, and there was something uncomfortable in his voice.

"Since when? I think Mr. Fane dined here first on the evening of the match."

"I beg your pardon, that was not what I was asking. Since when has he been in the habit of calling here? He is not an acquaintance of mine. Elinor Meadows, who always has a coterie of young fellows about her, brought him; she takes him everywhere. How often have you seen him, Vera? I don't want him here."

"How often?" Vera's foolish face began to flush as usual, though she would, she thought, have given everything she had in the world to prevent it. This made her father very angry, who liked a prompt and plain reply.

"Yes. How often? What are you frightened about? I don't eat you; give me a straightforward answer. How often have you seen him here?"

"I—I met him—at mamma's," said Vera, under her breath.

"Ah! at your mother's? So she has taken him up, too."

"I ought to say it is my fault, not Vera's," said Miss Campbell. "He knows some cousins of mine in Argylshire, the Campbells of Stormway. He has come to talk to me about them. Vera has seen very little of him," the governess added, with a little complacency, for indeed it had pleased her to feel that the visitor's conversation had been so much addressed to herself.

"Oh! that is it," he said, rather carelessly, "then perhaps you will not mind giving him a hint that I don't care

for his visits. There is not much in him; and his relationship to Lord Fanebery scarcely worth counting. Perhaps you might hint to him that if he calls again you are not likely to be at home."

"Surely, if you wish it," said Miss Campbell, though she was not pleased. As for Vera, a great blackness of darkness came over her. She had not always liked it when he came; but to lose him, to have no longer that piquant centre to her days, that something to dream of, to think of—what could she do? Vera felt that it was intolerable. At dinner she was too unhappy to preserve her usual composure. She was irritable in her suffering; so irritable as to move her father to the idea that she must be ill, and must go to the seaside, for which he issued his orders on the spot. She had never, since the days of her childhood, been so courageous before.

"I don't want change of air," she said. "It is all very well, I don't want change of air, for your friends. You do what like papa, for you. You enjoy yourself; but as for me I am sent pleasures you. You enjoy yourself; where I know nobody, where off to a dreadful seaside, and practise, and read, and walk, we live in horrible lodgings, and practise, and read, and walk, and do exactly as we do at home."

"Vera!" cried Miss Campbell, "I am shocked, I am astonished; you forget yourself."

"I just wish I could," cried Vera. I am so sick, so sick of myself! Let me go to Aunt Elinor, or to the villa; or let me stay at home."

Mr. Tremaine watched her with some astonishment. "I did not give your mother credit for so much discrimination," he said. "She warned me you had a temper. The seaside is far the best for you. When you are a few years older, you can visit your friends, too, and enjoy yourself."

Vera said nothing. She sat still, with flushed cheeks, excited and miserable, not trusting herself to look at any one. It seemed to her that she must strike a blow for her own deliverance, or die. For the first time in her life she waited after Miss Campbell had left the room, and going up to her father, put her hand timidly on his arm. "Papa," she said, imploringly, "when you go away don't leave me alone with Miss Campbell. Let me go to—the villa; or to Aunt Elinor—"

"Why will you give Miss Meadows that absurd name? She is not your aunt."

"I beg your pardon, papa, I will not do it again. I should be so much happier if I were not alone. The—villa? Mamma will not mind having me, and Eddy and I could be together, if only for a little while. I should be so good—so good and obedient—"

"And why should you not go to the seaside with Miss Campbell this year as well as every other year? Go away, go away, and don't let me hear any more of this."

Vera went away as he told her, without another word, without a look. She passed Miss Campbell, who was waiting and wondering on the staircase, and hurried to her room. She could not cry this time, her eyes were too hot and dry. Oh, why was she so different from other girls! Why had she not a mother to care for her, some one who would see what was happening, who would judge for her if she was wrong, who would not have left her to make Oswald Fane the centre of the world; he was the centre of the world, she felt it now!—the pivot upon which all that was worth having in life turned. If he was sent away, forbidden the house, what was to become of her? Either she would kill herself, or God would be kind and do it for her—one way or other, she must die.

Her heart beat so wildly that it made her sick and faint. But all at once she sat down it gave one big jump, and then was still. Why was this? Before her lay a letter carefully placed upon her little prayer-book, where she could not misse it. Vera knew at once what it was. Not from her mother, Eddy, any ordinary correspondent; from him. She did not know his handwriting. Why should it be from him? Perhaps it was some childish invitation, somebody's letter whom she did not care for. Saying this over to herself with trembling lips, and knowing it was not true, she opened the note, and with another big jump of her heart read as follows:—

"I met your father to-day as I left the house. He was not rude to me, but I read my doom in his eye. I am not to be allowed to come any more. I shall come—I shall leave no chance untried; I will try to see him, and plead my cause with him; but I know how it will end, unless you, you alone, you who are my better life, will stand by me. Is it too much? Ah, I know it is too much. I have no right to disturb your young life, to bring painful questions into it; but I am in despair; and you, you too—sweet Vera, for whom I would give my life, you are not happy either. But for this I would go away; I would trust to time and Providence to bring me back to your feet, where alone I can be happy. But to know that you are lonely and in trouble too—that is what I cannot bear. Vera, darling, forgive me, write me one word, only one word, and do not let them separate us. Have pity upon me! Since the first day I saw you, that white day, I have had no thought but you."

"O. F."

Vera read this with feelings I cannot describe. There had never been a word of love-making between them, so to speak, nothing but those vague suggestions which make the early paths of love so exquisite; but after this letter there could be no further disguise. She read it over and over again with a mixture of heartrending pain and delight, one as delicious and as heartrending as the other. Stand by him? What else could she do?—for he was her life if she was his; but worse to him! How could she do that? How she trembled, how sore her heart was, how happy! Out of the despair and thankless hopelessness with which she had left the dining-room, what a change to this sea of emotion, so sweet, so terrible, so alarming, yet consoling! Neither father nor mother had any sympathy for Vera, any feeling for her feelings; but he felt for her, with her, everything she felt—yet but for her would be as much alone as she was; they were two against the world. But write to him! The thought trembled all through her, made her hand shake, and her heart beat. Could she do it? How could she do it? When she heard a sound at her door she thrust the letter away, not into her bosom, which would have been romantic, but into her pocket, which was natural; and, conscious in every look and breath and movement turned round to see who it was; fortunately it was only Mary, the daughter of her old nurse, who had lately been promoted to be Vera's maid. Mary was over twenty, an experienced young person, who had "sent company" for many years with a tall Guardsman to whom she was faithful through many thirtings on both sides. She knew what it was to have had parents and a troublesome cook to interfere with the course of her true love; but even cook was not so bad as Miss Campbell. And to have—Miss Vera's little heart broken and her young man driven to despair was not a thing which could be allowed to be, if sympathetic Mary could

Had Mr. Tremblhore been in better spirits he would have laughed; but, fortunately for Eddy, he was not in good spirits. He was worn out and depressed, and amiable as perhaps he had never been before in his life. "My dear Ned," he said gently, in the darkness, rousing all the lad's hopes by the softness of his tone, "whether I might have agreed or disagreed with your

mother scarcely matters in this instance. I am afraid it will be a disappointment to you if you have so set your heart upon it; but the fact is, there is to be no expedition to Africa under the charge of Mr. Buckram Bass. That very clever man is supposed by some people to be too clever. The Geographical Society will not give him a grant, neither will Government; and his expedition has melted into thin air. No one will go with him to Africa for many a day."

"But I heard from him on Monday, about the vacancy," cried Edward with a gasp.

"Then he must have had some plan in his head for equipment, by which he could make something," said Mr. Tremeneere. "I cannot be mistaken, you know, in my position; and so you may make it up with your mother, and relieve her mind as soon as you choose." Then moved by an amiable impulse, —for the boy pleased him—he added, "I am very sorry for your disappointment, Ned."

"Oh, it does not matter," cried the lad, with a great gulp of self-control. Dark waters of bitterness surged up into Edward's eyes, but fortunately the darkness concealed them. And acting on an English boy's savage code of honour, he made a brave effort at once to talk of other things, and covered the stab he had got. No word should any one hear more on the subject from his lips with his will. The pain stung him like that Spartan fox; but, like the boy whom it devoured, he would rather die than complain.

And here Mr. Tremeneere was of more use to his son than the boy's mother would have been. She would have felt the sting for Edward as sharply as he felt it for himself. She would have lavished a thousand sympathetic tenderesses upon him to make up for his suffering. His father did nothing of the sort. For one thing he did not truly realise how great the blow was; but he was sorry for the disappointment—said so once, and was done with it; and talked about other things, forcing Eddy to answer him, and helping him to keep down the pain. But, poor fellow, he had a bad night of it when it was too late to sit up any longer. It obliterated Vera from his mind, and all his anxiety about her. Vera was but a stranger to him after all; and this was so close a misery, and so near!

The father and son made but a miserable breakfast next morning. "I must get off to town, I cannot delay longer," said Mr. Tremeneere. "When you consider where that unhappy child may be—what may be happening to her,—perhaps at that fellow's mercy, confound him! No, no, I can't stay,—don't ask me. Your mother must have no news, or she would have telegraphed before now."

"I am quite ready, sir," said Edward. They were both of them pale and miserable; and Mr. Tremeneere, forgetting already Edward's own share of trouble, was touched by this supposed sympathy. "You don't know much of your sister," he said, "I will not forget, my boy, how you've thrown yourself into it. Please God, when we find her we'll be a more united family. Ned, she and you will have to help me with your mother. She is a proud woman, but for my part I am not proud; and I

don't mind making a sacrifice if only—God help us!—we could find the child."

"We shall find her!" cried Edward, this time with a rush of real sympathy which came to his eyes, and made them shine; and though Mr. Tremeneere knew that Edward's confidence was without foundation, it cheered him as the foolishlest consolation sometimes does. He grasped his son's hand with a tremulous yet strenuous grasp.

"Come along," he said; "I know it is too early for the train, but somehow it is easier to endure one's self when one is in motion. It feels like doing something. Your mother has the best of it staying in town. What a pretty place she has made of this! What a fool I was—good heavens! what an ass! when she asked it, not to let her have the child here!"

"Don't think of that now, sir," said Eddy with feeling. "Come out into the garden in the meantime,—the air will do you good." He was very sorry for his father. He led him through the little space which had been planted so cleverly, and showed him the points of view, upon which they both looked with pre-occupied eyes. It wanted half an hour yet to the time for the train, and the station was not ten minutes' walk. Then Mr. Tremeneere remembered a note he had to write, and they went back into the house that he might do it. He sat down at his wife's writing table, and used the paper with her monogram.

How strange that the recollection should dart on him then of another time when he had done this,—when he had taken a pretty sheet with "Ada" emblazoned on it, to write to his sister of the engagement between Ada Langdale and himself! Curious moment for such a reminiscence; but the man was weakened with much unusual feeling, and he stopped to recollect it. "I think it must be a good sign," he said half to himself; "once I took her paper before—"

He was interrupted by a touch on his shoulder, and jumped up, nearly upsetting the paraphernalia of the writing table. "Charles," said his wife, taking him by both hands, "I went to our house last night, where you took me when we were married; and there, at home, where she ought to be, and where I ought to have been all this time taking care of her,—I found the child!"

"God bless you, Ada!" he cried, with a sudden great sob, forced from him by the surprise and the joy. And then he made a blind clutch at her, his eyes being full, and got her into his arms. "You have found her,—and I have found you!"

And it was thus that these foolish people ended their matrimonial quarrel. They had had ten years of it, which was certainly enough, and it had not answered. But the reader must not imagine that all the consequences dispersed into thin air when the principals took each other's hands, as Mr. Bass's African Expedition had done. Edward's heart mended after a while, though it was very sore; but it would not have mended so easily had Government and the Geographical Society encouraged instead of making an end of the expedition of Mr. Buckram Bass. And Providence, though it interfered on one side in this way did not interfere on the other to make an end of Oswald Fane. He stood in solid

flesh and blood in the path of the united family, refusing to let all be as it ought to have been. Poor Oswald! it was his wholesome punishment for him to find his bird flown on the very day when he intended to fly with her,—carrying her beyond pursuit or power of any one to touch her. But a thing which has been carried so far can rarely stop there. As soon as she was parted from him, and the terrible spectre of marriage removed out of her way, Vera began to pine for her lover; and her lover began to besiege the heart, soft with penitence and reconciliation, of Mrs. Tremeneere. Between the two they worked so effectively that Mr. Tremeneere, no longer absolute sovereign in Hyde Park Square, but reduced to the safer limits of a constitutional monarchy and a joint throne, had to give in at last; and much less alarmed by the word than she had been a year before, Vera Tremeneere, at seventeen, with all the pomp befitting a lawful ceremonial, permitted by all the authorities, married Oswald Fane. I wish it was permitted me to kill the uninteresting elder Fane. I wish it was permitted me to kill the young pair master and mistress of the paternal halls at Weathercock; but, partly by her father's influence, partly by that of Lord Fanebury, who came to the marriage and good-humouredly declared the bridegroom to be his very cousin, Oswald got a valuable appointment, and the young pair went to Italy after all; and coming home, settled down very comfortably, and were much happier than the improper and reprehensible beginning of their story deserved;—which is a bad moral, but to change it is beyond my power.

Edward Tremeneere went into his father's office, and became private secretary to his father's chief,—an admirable appointment. In the meantime, however, he was left free for a great deal of travel, and took to climbing mountains, by special grace of Providence, and became a member of the Alpine Club, atoning to himself in his holidays for the responsibility and regularity of his everyday life. Miss Campbell, I am glad to say, had saved enough money to retire upon an annuity, and tortures young girls no more; but she still thinks Mr. Tremeneere's family monsters of ingratitude for not requiring her exertions in saving their child. Mary was dismissed, as she deserved; but I fear surreptitious means were used whereby she was enabled to marry her Guardsman. Everybody had done wrong all round, and which was the one that was to throw a stone? The only person who had a right to do so was Elinor Meadows, who made a speech to the reunited family on the evening of the day on which Oswald was first received among them, and Vera's happiness sanctioned by her parents. Miss Meadows pushed back the vigorous rings of grey hair from her broad forehead and held out her oratorical right hand. "You two old fools," she said, "and you two young ones, I don't know which of you have made yourselves the most ridiculous. I protest against this absurd happiness, which you have no right to. All of you in your turn have come to me in the depths of despair, and employed me to intercede for you. I never did the least good by my attempts. How dare you, without either rhyme or reason, and every law of justice against it, be so happy now?"

THE END.